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SAVAGE LIFE  
IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA



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# SAVAGE LIFE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

BY

G. HORNE, V.D., M.A., M.D., CH.B.

AND

G. AISTON

MOUNTED POLICE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP*

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## PREFACE

THIS book on the country, the habits and customs as well as the beliefs of the Wonkonguru and their neighbours, is the result of a visit to Mungeranie and that district. It is largely due to the kindness and thought of Mr. G. Aiston of the Mounted Police, who has acted as protector of aborigines in that district.

Many of his letters have been incorporated almost verbatim, and this has led to some repetition. But I have let it stand rather than alter the drift of the narrative.

To anyone dealing with the Australian tribes the writings that always stand out in supreme importance are the classic by Dr. A. W. Howitt, who laid the foundation of the study, and the books of Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, which are models of exhaustive research. We also owe much to Messrs. Gason and Siebert, who lived long amongst the blacks.

For the last eight or nine years Mr. Aiston has dwelt at Mungeranie, although more than twenty years he has spent in aborigines' haunts. His position led him to become their friend and protector, and many were the stories told to him by those who were boys when the first explorers penetrated the country. The opportunity

to collect this information must soon pass, for it is stored with men eighty or ninety years of age and their confidence is not easily won.

My friendship with their friend, and some lucky display of surgical skill, enabled me at once to jump into the esteem of three of their number.

To many assistants we owe much for the aid that they have given us. Amongst these old Koonki and Peter Pinnaru taught us what nowhere else could be learnt. Mr. Crombie, Mr. Ward and Mr. Walter Neil proved unexcelled as narrators and as guides.

To Mr. Goodwin and to Mr. Broinowski, whose map is a feature of our book, our best thanks are due.

Above all an incalculable debt of gratitude is due to Sir Baldwin Spencer, who not once, but several times, read through and corrected the manuscript. From him came the suggestion of grouping in chapters and of omitting much that can appear elsewhere. His advice and kindly criticism was always well chosen and was never withheld.

Any success that our book may achieve is due in no small measure to him.

I am indebted to the Royal Society for permission to publish my notes on the subject of *Karamula yudika*.

G. H.

Melbourne,  
1923.

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Map showing the Location of Aboriginal Tribes east of Lake Eyre.  
(at end of volume)



# SAVAGE LIFE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

## CHAPTER I

### LAKE EYRE DISTRICT

THE railway running up from Adelaide drops passengers at Marree, before it turns westward on its journey. If, however, instead of following the line to Oodnadatta, one turns to the north-east along the Queensland track, the vast watershed of Lake Eyre opens up in front. Pre-eminently it is the country of the camel, whose circular pads mark the sandy soil as can be done by nothing else. In a long string the camels slowly pace forward, keeping in file. At the head rides or walks an Afghan, and at the tail of the column another watches lest anything drop by the way. Sometimes the sandy plain is whirled up by the wind into a miniature mountain range, forty or fifty feet high, that, following the prevailing course of the storms, lies roughly north and south. Generally parallel ridges of from two up to half a dozen in number are formed, and anywhere these may be so close together as practically to make one with a long depression at the top. Here, when it rains, a little moisture collects and nourishes the scanty, straggling scrub that coats the slopes of the hollow. Here

too are placed the graves of those who have died, as the soft sand is easy to work. The sand, however, is only a part of the picture. Where the wind has blown the sand away, the rust-red stones creep to the surface.

About fifty miles from the north-east corner of Lake Eyre runs the long sand-hill that extends from Apawandinna northwards past Cowarie Station until it is checked by the Warburton river. To the east, the sand to build this ridge has been chased from between the pebbles, which now lie as tightly packed as tessellated pavement. Quite a feature of the landscape is the flat-topped hills that occasionally occur, and often near Lake Harry a table hill is found in close proximity to a sharp peak. These represent the original level of the country before, uncountable years ago, denudation carved out valleys and curves. The table-tops arise because the solid stony cap of quartzite protects in places the more crumbling parts below. The peak is formed by an end of the table-top breaking away and by constant loss dwindling in size. There stretches mile after mile of dull orange-red stones but, when you turn to face the sun, the transmitted light glows of a deep purple hue that loses itself where the mirage shimmers in the distance. The sand blow polishes the coppery-looking surface until it is far smoother than any water-worn stone could be. Gibber or *gibba* is the name given by the blacks and adopted by the whites for these stones, and "the gibbers" is the term used to denote the wind-swept plains. Especially as night falls nothing could be more lonely.

Quickly the darkness comes on. Far away in the west

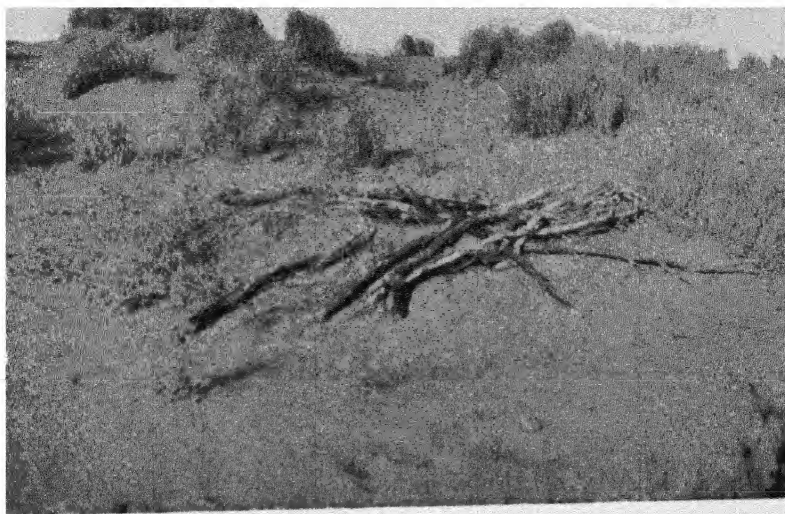


FIG. 1.—HERE TOO ARE PLACED THE GRAVES.

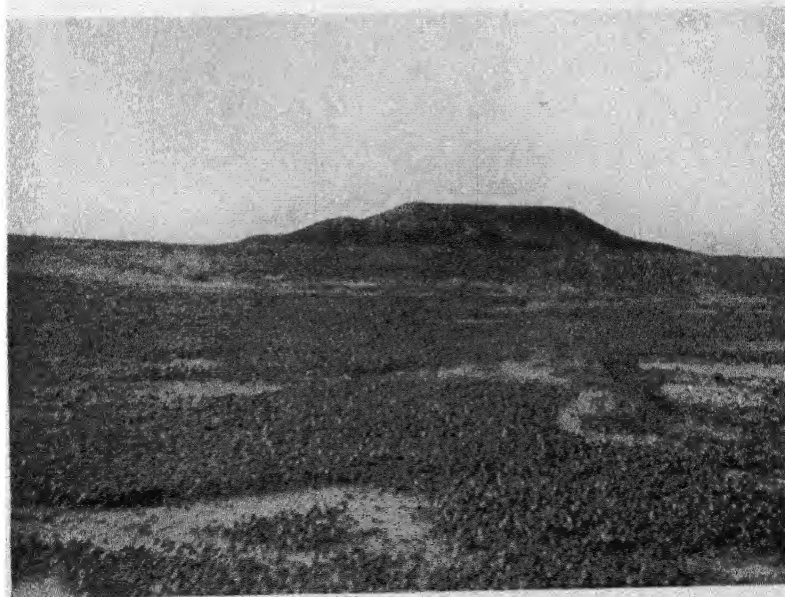


FIG. 2.—THE GIBBERS.





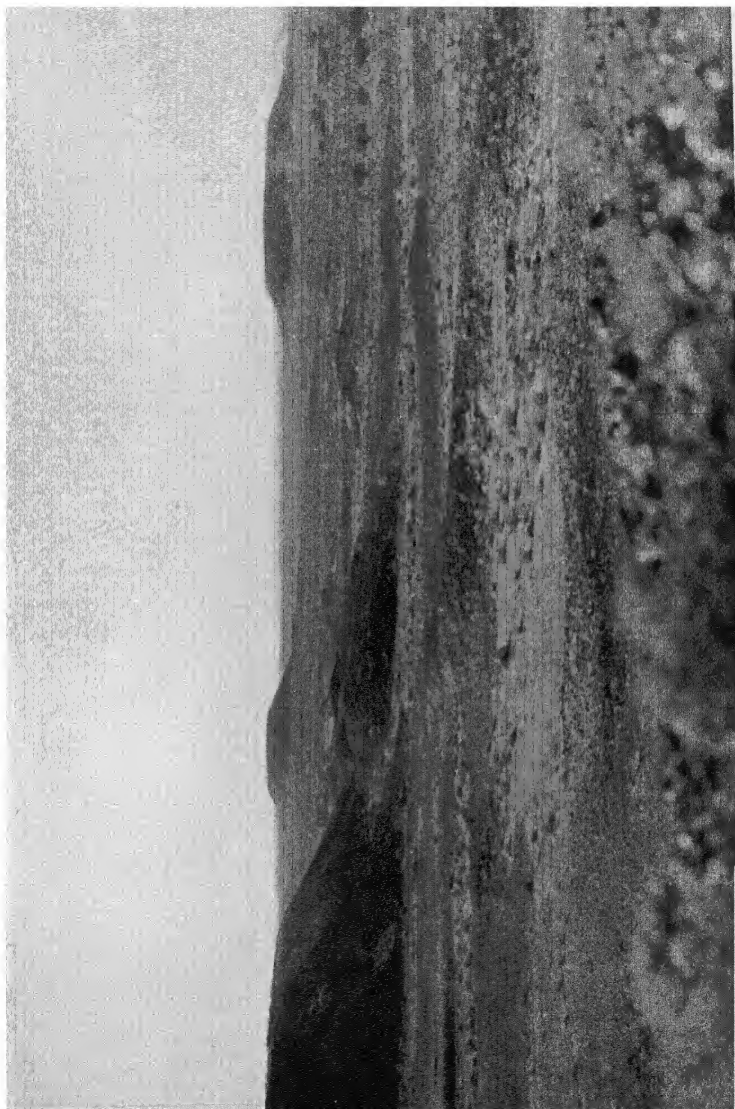


FIG. 3.—THE FLAT-TOPPED HILLS.





the sand-hills are touched with a fiery gold that seems to be poured out over the gibbers. Then suddenly the flow is cut off short, and, though the sky above still glows, the expanse below is grey and cold. The glow fades and the sky pales to a faint pink, edged, as one goes further from the west, with a deep and deeper violet.

Soon, very soon, all colour vanishes, until it is one fathomless immensity of dark, dark blue. In a minute the stars are points peeping through, then lights looking through, then lamps hung low from the vault.

On the gibbers the silence comes as a shock in its suddenness. Where the box trees mark the sandy track of a dried-up creek, or where the salt bush creeps out on to the plain, the moan of the dingo or the faint call of the boobook breaks the stillness.

But on the gibbers the silence is undisturbed.

Across this waste two watercourses have ploughed their way. On the south is Cooper's Creek or the Barcoo, which runs west from Kopperamanna to lose itself in the salt expanse of Lake Eyre. As a river, the Cooper does not at present exist. Just a bore-fed trickle remains, for the Government has put down bores at thirty-mile intervals all the way along the cattle route from Queensland and the north. At Lake Harry, Dulkaninna, Kopperamanna, Ooroowillanie, Mungeranie, and Mirramitta<sup>1</sup> there pours out this never-ending supply. On an average the bore goes down 4000 feet before reaching the water, which comes up at the rate of a million gallons a day and is boiling hot. In the early morning

<sup>1</sup> Or Mirra Mitta.

the steam from the bore shows up white in the cold air, and though the smell of sulphuretted hydrogen is found in some bores, the water is quite palatable to drink. Into the northern part of Lake Eyre near the mouth of the Macumba runs the Warburton. As the Diamantina, this river rises in Queensland, whence it flows south and south-west until it is lost in Goyder's Lagoon. From this it emerges as the Warburton, though it is still often called the Diamantina, and goes to the south-west past Cowarie Station, which is the last inhabited place before one crosses the lake and reaches Oodnadatta. The most southerly point of the Warburton river is reached at the deserted camp of Kalamurina, whence it runs nearly east into the lake.

For two or three years, or even for more, a flood may be known beforehand to be on the way. Strange as it may appear, it often comes down in the driest seasons, for the small local rains and cloud-bursts have little significance, but far away in the Queensland mountains it is the steady downpour that makes the overflow.

The area to the east of Lake Eyre has two main channels of drainage, the Diamantina, or Warburton, as the stretches below Goyder's Lagoon are called, and the Cooper. The Cooper or Barcoo starts far away in the north and east. When it comes to Innamincka, where Burke and Wills starved out their last, it may be running a flood, but below at Kopperamanna and Killalpaninna the sand may lie quite dry.

Before it reaches even Lake Perigundi it must flood Woolkawoolkinna, Yarowinie, and a thousand other

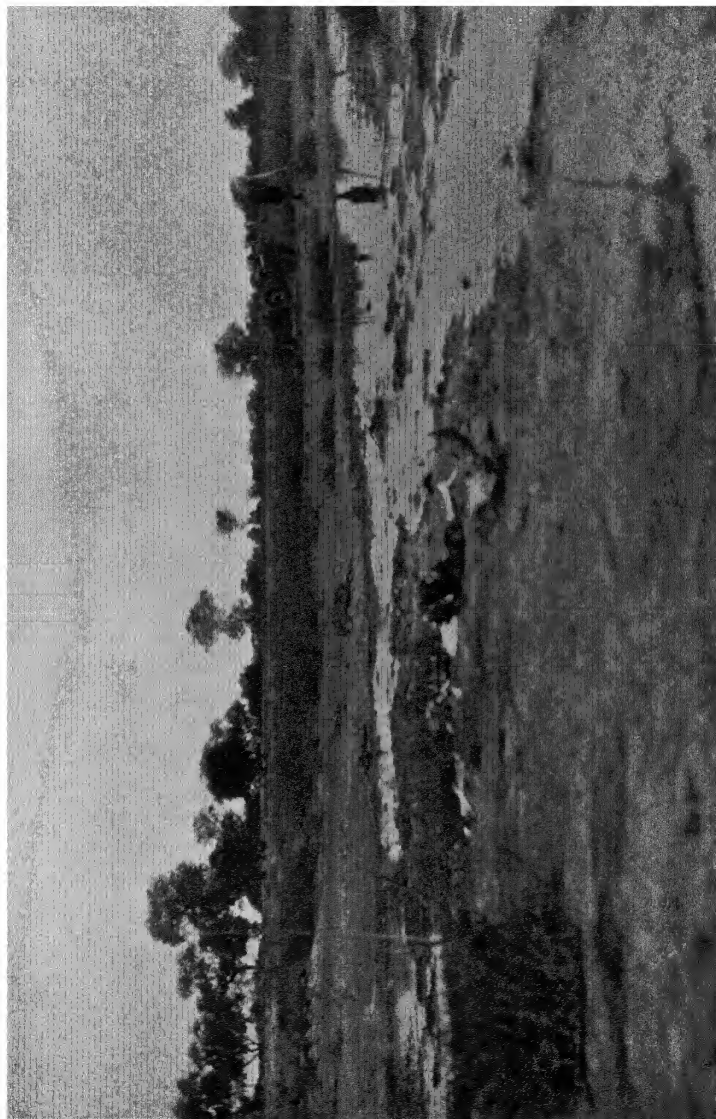


FIG. 4.—COOPER'S CREEK IS, AT PRESENT, JUST A BORE-FED TRICKLE.





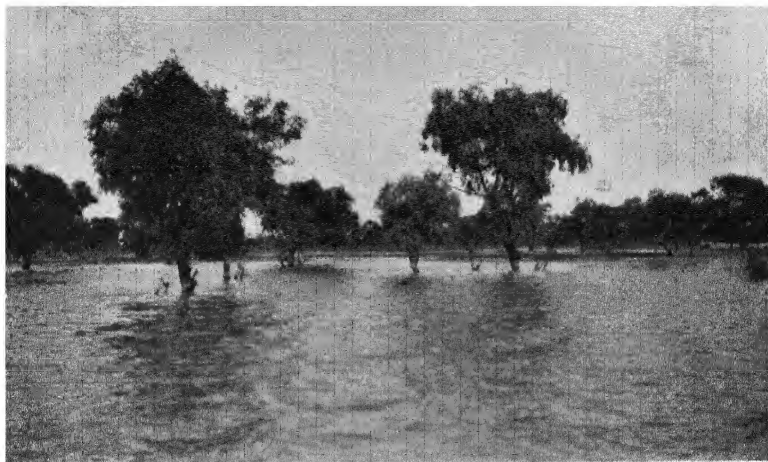


FIG. 5.—THE COOPER IN FLOOD.



FIG. 6.—THE COOPER IN FLOOD.



lakes. These are spread over the country, and each in its turn must be filled until it overflows before it pours the surplus into the next salt marsh or dry pan below. The saltiness is due, I think, to soda absorbed from the soil, which lies as a white crust on the surface from which the waters have receded.

It takes quite an exceptional flood to fill Perigundi, which is now at this present time (1922) beginning to creep up to the edges of its banks. Still lower down in its course lies the huge depression of Lake Hope. When this is once full the expanse below shares at last in the outpouring. Down the main escape channel the water comes, growing in volume. Suddenly from a hundred lesser channels the flood sweeps on, not in the noisy swirl that our Victorian hilly country knows, but in the steady rush that shows the immense force that is behind. Soon the low banks, that many such overflows have heaped up, are passed. Then for many miles it spreads out in a slowly drifting tide.

Mr. Crombie had for thirty years lived at Mungeranie, where the Derwent carries off the water to the Warburton or Diamantina. About eighteen months ago he noticed that the flood waters in this feeder of the main channel were beginning to rise. Up they crept to the edge of the bamboos which, fed by the bore water, make a little fringe round the homestead. Then of a sudden the water leaped two feet. The marshes above had reached the limit they could hold and all the rest poured over in a tumult. In their night-clothes the Crombies escaped to their only neighbours, the Aistons. Then a sea walked in and over, sweeping the

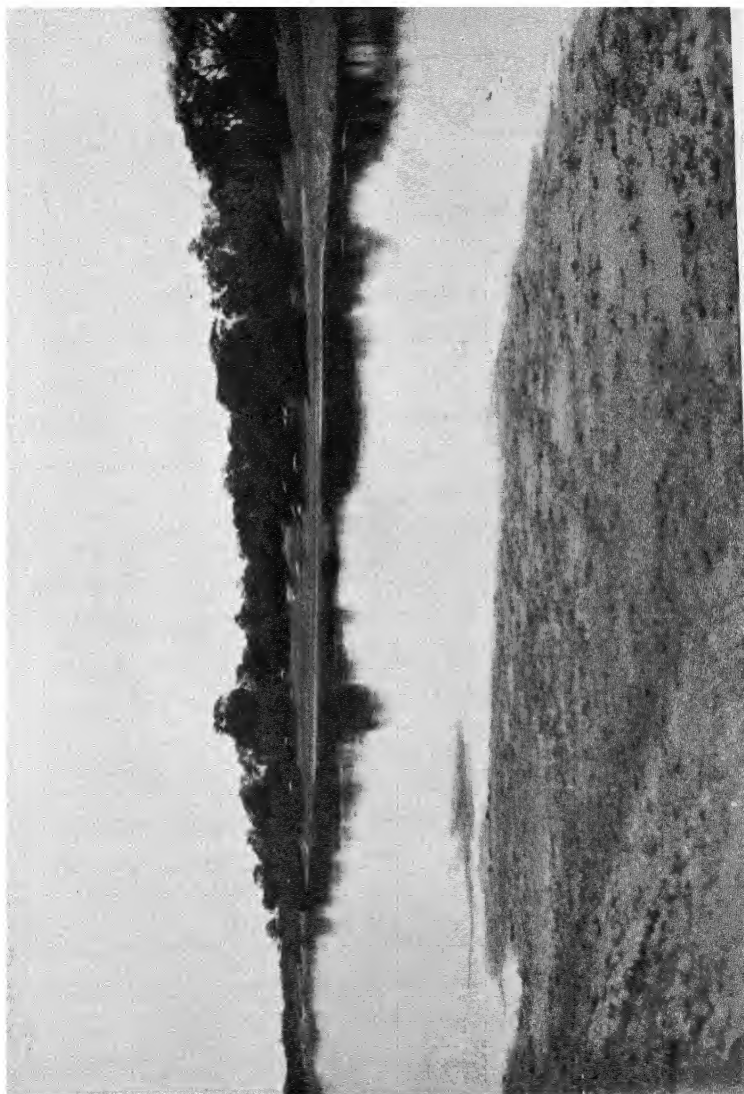
house away. Aiston, riding for three days through water from Marree, swam the creek before the big flush came in, and watched the flood turn, just as it reached to his door.

The Diamantina is different in some respects from the Cooper. Its channel is in places two hundred yards broad and deeply excavated. This must first be filled up before the torrent spills over into the lower flat country beyond. Once it is beyond the raised banks the flood overspreads the whole country. Soon, however, it drops again and once more wanders along hundreds of backwaters. The Diamantina has now been running for the last eight years, although at present only a little rivulet remains between the great pools. These keep fresh as long as there is any current, and along its sides are nourished huge clumps of lignum twelve feet high. Its track is marked by the stunted growth of coolibah,<sup>1</sup> as the box trees are called. Five miles in breadth this lightly timbered growth extends. Near Lake Eyre, Mr. Crombie (perhaps the only man who has seen the east bank of this great mud expanse) tells me, the trees dwindle in size as one nears the salt water; until finally dwarf trees only a few feet high are all that remain.

But the floods, being caused by the downpours far off in Queensland, have very little effect upon the climate of the country which lies between where the two great streams flow. To the life of the natives it makes this difference, that, in flood time, fish can easily be procured and water is never wanting.

The presence of artificial lagoons from the bores

<sup>1</sup> *Eucalyptus microtheca*.



**FIG. 7.—THE WARBURTON IN LIAMANTINA.**



attracts the natives from the drier districts. Near the bores, too, live the whites, who give employment to the younger men. At Mungeranie, in addition, the old and those who could not fend for themselves receive a little dole of flour and sugar.

But even with these inducements few of them linger near any settlement, preferring their own savage existence. One thing they will do, and that is catch the dingo, for this allows them perfect freedom and at the same time gains them the liberal allowance of 7s. 6d. per scalp.

Perhaps nothing prevents progress in the aborigines so much as their innate improvidence. They can save, and at times they do save. Witness the preparations for corroborees. To some of these ceremonies numbers come from long distances and remain as the guests of the local hosts for a week or much more. A store of *nardoo*, *munyeroo*, *wadroo*,<sup>1</sup> or of rations issued to the old and infirm, is buried in the sand or kept in a *pirrha*<sup>2</sup> placed on the roof of a hut or *poonga*. Snakes, rats and rabbits are cooked whole and put on the platform formed upon four stakes driven into the ground. (This is necessary to save them from the dogs.) Such a platform is called the *dunpara*. They will starve themselves to make a good show before their visitors, but yet, except with this definite object in view, they have no idea of saving for an emergency. Exactly the same is seen in the issuing of flour and sugar, as is customary in Mungeranie. A certain amount is allowed per month to the old and infirm, but they crave for it all at once. Their idea is

<sup>1</sup> Vegetable foods.

<sup>2</sup> A wooden bowl.

to have a good gorge and then "go one big fella hungry." They are kindness itself to their dogs, and nothing is commoner than to see a dozen forcing their way under an old man's blanket. Yet no idea of having too large a pack to provide for will prompt them to limit the size of a litter or to destroy a miserable weedy little cur that has a broken leg.

The growth of food from seed seemed quite beyond their ken. Ceremonies they have, such as the scattering of certain stones (*murrallacardia*) to make the *wirras*<sup>1</sup> grow, or *yelka*<sup>2</sup> were scattered around to give a crop of *yauas*<sup>3</sup> or yams, but no idea existed of planting a seed with the hope of a harvest. True, the seed of the *wirra* was also thrown broadcast, but this seed had first to be crushed, and therefore rendered impossible of fertilisation.

These ceremonies are generally performed after a shower of rain has fallen or at any rate seems imminent.

Given a good rain, the whole country blossoms. The marsh-mallows grow up rapidly, so high that a horse is hidden below the violet blooms. The daisy carpets the slopes with its yellow stars. Bluebells are dotted here and there or grow in vivid clusters. The yellow blaze of the mulga and the creamy, feathery flower of the spiny needle bush fill the air with perfume.

"Hurry, hurry," they all seem to say. "Time to spare there is none, so hurry." In the pools of the clay-pans the four-leafed *nardoo* floats on the surface,

<sup>1</sup> *Wirra* is the *Acacia salicina*, the ashes of whose leaves are chewed with *pitcheri*.

<sup>2</sup> Small white stones.

<sup>3</sup> *Yaua* is the *Cyperus* or onion grass.





FIG. 8.—THE WHOLE COUNTRY BLOSSOMS.



FIG. 9.—MUNGERANIE LAGOON.



and points to the plenteous harvest below. Hurry, hurry, there are but a few short weeks and then the scorching heat will shut down once more, and of all the brightness and beauty nothing will be left but dry stems and hard, blackened seeds.

Tradition has it that before the white man came, many years ago, upon the Warburton and Diamantina, there was a most wonderfully luxuriant season. Following this a terrible fire came sweeping almost down to Lake Eyre. Many of the blacks were burnt to death. *Willoo*, the plover, being a cunning bird, turned himself to stone and watched the blaze, but *Telca*, the white rat, burrowed deep in the earth until the flames had gone by. Two mooras were the cause of this blaze, and ever after they decreed that, when making fire, precautions must be taken.

Here there are but two seasons, summer and winter. During the latter part of April the weather begins to become endurable, and in May on to August clear, sharp nights and bright, blue and gold days are quite the rule. A dozen rainy days in the year is about the number, and these generally come during this period. The rainfall averages only four inches, ranging between one and twelve inches per year, and the heat is intense—115° F. has been registered—but the dryness of the climate makes it quite bearable. Violent whirlwinds sometimes stalk across the plains, scaring the natives, who think their sandy bulk hides *kootchi*, that is, a malignant spirit. More troublesome are the clouds of mosquitoes, from whose bites Mungeranie takes its name.

Tradition has it that many years ago a moora, wandering over the earth, came to the place and camped there. So vicious, however, were the mosquitoes that he scratched his forehead until it was sore, and to avoid their further attacks he sank into the ground. The native word *mung* means forehead.

One notable effect of the white man's coming is the stop that it has put to attacks on strangers who wander beyond their own territory. But the natives still keep fairly strictly to their boundaries. The Ngameni live on the north of the Warburton. The Wonkonguru are between the two rivers, from Lake Eyre to Lake Hope, whilst beyond them the Yaurorka have their land. South of the Cooper the Dieri live, and thanks to Messrs. Siebert and Gason, and more especially to the classic work of Dr. A. W. Howitt, they have been well described.

West of Lake Eyre the Urabunna, and north of them the great nation of the Arunta, have had their customs comprehensively dealt with by Sir Baldwin Spencer and Mr. Gillen. I was rather surprised to find how little manners, customs, implements and weapons had been changed by the blending of the tribes. The club-ended throwing-stick or *wirrie* is still the distinctive weapon of the Wonkonguru and their immediate neighbours, and amongst them the boomerang is not as a rule flattened on one side, as is usual amongst the Queensland aboriginal tribes.

The hooked boomerang is never in common use, though occasionally one is obtained by barter. Very different is it, however, with the white men's implements. The superiority of his tools has forced from the

field the stone tomahawk and the wooden digging-stick. Certainly the *wadna*, or woman's digging-stick, is still used, and the boomerang and wooden bowl are employed in turning over the soft sand in their hunt for edible roots or for rats and rabbits. But the iron crowbar is so absolutely better where the ground is at all hard that it easily holds its place. The sharpened steel from a shear-blade or buggy spring is bound with sinews on to a stick, making an adze; but some few strictly conservative workers remain who use stone even for the rough hewing of the boomerang and discard the glass fragments when smoothing down the ridges.

Clothing and many decorations are, of course, borrowed very largely. A cut with the whip was sometimes the black's fate if caught without clothes; so, until they knew us, our coming was the signal to hurry into a tattered shirt, or a pair of trousers, or a skirt.

The decorations have been taken in many instances from the white; thus I saw at a corroboree a green band round one performer's neck, and a blue cap on a man's head. Many of the fur tassels which are hung on each side of the head are not mounted on hair or fibre string, but on some cord whose pink tinge tells clearly of its origin.

The time, therefore, has gone by for obtaining knowledge of the blacks' mentality uncontaminated. Many years of contact with the whites have robbed them of the freshness of their native customs. The mission stations, with the best possible motives, have done even worse; for they have supplied new traditions and new legends that threaten to overwhelm the old moora myths. The

change in the relations between the old and the young is most significant. Formerly the old man by virtue of his age was the ruler. Certain articles of food were for him alone. But now the young men draw their money and receive their rations from the white man, and, protected by him, their respect for the marriage conventions grows less and less strong. So the native, from our point of view unmoral in his mode of living, becomes immoral in practices sanctioned neither by white man nor by black.

Nevertheless, the training of years is in his blood, and public opinion holds him firm, preventing him from openly defying the native conventions.

Seniority runs through the whole of the aboriginal systems. It is maintained by the old men, who always retain some rite or ceremony which is not made known to the juniors. Of course, upon this rite the utmost stress is laid, and its import (often most trifling) is kept among the fewest possible number.

This is served first by the many grades in initiation, and later by the knowledge of various parts in corroborees, some of which are reserved only for the elders. Age in itself, quite apart from fitness, seems to give a right to authority.

A very good example of this might be found in the case of the half-caste Bob Neylan.

Old Neylan, a white man, hated his brother Jack, and as there were only the two of them in the country, he left by will to Bob, the half-caste, all his outfit, rather than let "that b—— Jack" get it. Bob was the son either of old Neylan or the supplanted Jack, they did not know

or care which. His mother was a full-blooded aborigine. Now on old Neylan's death Bob, with this legacy, should have become a man of some importance. However, one day he came round to Mungeranie saying that he was going to undergo the circumcision rite. This he did, but even so the elder natives treated him as an inferior. He was ordered about and, although he was, according to our law, their boss, he still continued at menial and subordinate tasks.

Whatever the old men ordered he had to do, and very soon his horses, saddles and equipment vanished away. It is absolutely useless putting a half-caste, let alone a pure aborigine, over the natives unless, according to their laws and rites, he is a headman. He cannot give orders, he can only take them, except some white man is in evidence to uphold his authority.

In matters affecting the natives the old men's influence and wishes are still paramount. There is also a strong sense of fairness among the aborigines and, though they fight to kill, there is never a thought of a foul blow.

The fight where Mulka Bill was killed started with the "boning" of his daughter, whose grave is under the dead-finish acacia tree on what is since called Polly's Hill. Had I been asked for a death certificate I would have called her complaint by quite a different name. Mulka Bill was a disagreeable man, always making trouble and stirring up fights. He came north to Mungeranie to see who "boned" Polly. Nobody had a word to say against her to raise his suspicions. Koonki and Peter Pinnaru, who are "doctor" and headman respectively, received him coldly. So he went north to

Mirra Mitta,<sup>1</sup> and from thence on to Wichawichinna, then back to Emu Bone, on the Warburton, and from there to Cowarie, everywhere making mischief.

Then Alice his gin died. A mob of Kanowna blacks had come down to Mungeranie, and amongst them was her son. The creek was in flood and it was bitterly cold, but all the same, Alice swam over, stopped an hour petting her boy, and then she swam back. The next day Koonki, the Mungeranie medicine man, casually strolled in and remarked, "Alice bin tumble down." "What name her tumble down?" he was asked. "Oh," he replied, "me bin plant her this morning" (I have buried her this morning). Then Mulka Bill was quite sure that some of the Mungeranie tribe had been "boning," and he came down the road breathing blood and thunder. Ordinarily the old men would have looked for tracks in the swept sand around the grave to indicate the one who had "boned" her. As it was, events were rather precipitated by Mulka's mother's brother (General was his nickname) interfering and accusing the local men of being the culprits.

A council was held and two men were appointed to fight the two accusers. Mulka had one arm disabled, so he was paired against Dinnabillie, whose left hand was off. General, who was a powerful man and a great fighter, had opposed to him a slender youth, Dinna-billie's sister's son, Carunta. The meeting was fixed for the Seven Sandhills, midway between their two camps. They were each armed with six *kirras*,<sup>2</sup> stuck three on each side, in the hair belts that were wound round their

<sup>1</sup> Written also Mirramitta.

<sup>2</sup> Boomerangs.



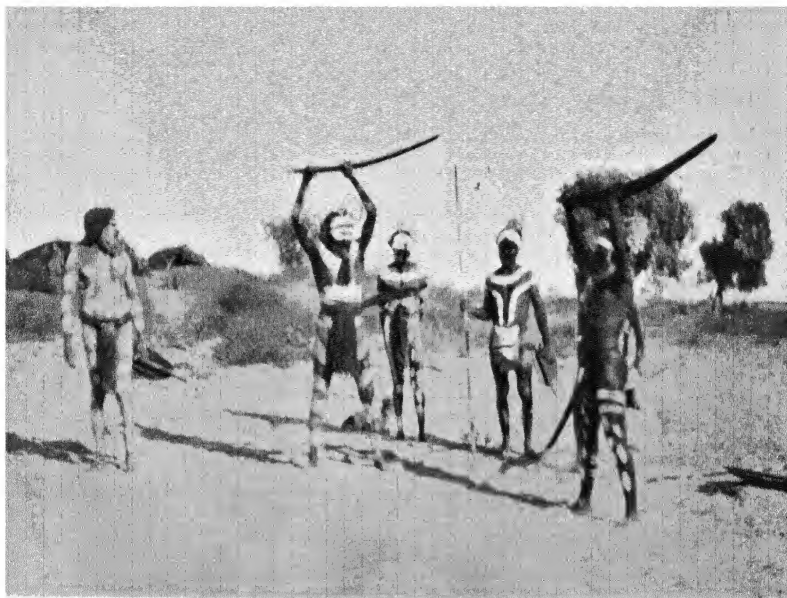


FIG. 10.—A MURRAWIRRIE FIGHT.



FIG. 11.—MEN OF THE DIERI TRIBE.



waists. At the back the long four-foot boomerang called *murrawirrie* was thrust, its end projecting over the head, so that it could easily be drawn and used as a broadsword. To Dinnabillie's credit it must be said that, although he had had given to him a revolver, for killing diseased cattle, this he handed to old Peter to return in case of his death.

Now Carunta is left-handed, and a *kirra* thrown by him comes in from a man's right. The unusual flight may have confused General, anyway it glanced off his guard, the sharp wood shearing through his heavy brow and smashing his eye.

Dinnabillie ran in, hastily throwing his *kirras*, and then, warding off his opponent's missiles, he closed. For years one hand had been all that Dinnabillie could use. Guard he could not, but whirling the *murrawirrie* above his head, he crashed it into Mulka's chest. The umpire cried "Mootcha," that is, "Enough," and the fight was ended. Thus is justice, rude but even-handed, done amongst the Wonkonguru.

The old habits and the old thoughts cling very firmly and, after all, it is on the surface that the change is greatest. Behind the real inward beliefs and feelings the weight of centuries presses heavily. Much there will be still to be learnt before the black man, with his small brain, has come to think white.

## CHAPTER II

### CAMP AND CAMP LIFE

WINDING across the gibbers, or tucked close under the lee of a miles-long north and south sand-ridge, runs the fringe of box trees that shows where the flood-time makes a creek. On a little rising ground a cluster of dark brown beehives, about four feet high, stand out against the yellow sand and olive coolibah.

No smoke is rising, for the native fires make neither smoke nor blaze. No men nor women, not even children, are to be seen. One's approach, however, is not allowed for long to continue unmolested. A score of mongrels with barks and yelps rush out. They are a miserable, thin, undersized lot and they cower before a raised stick. The boomerang or *kirra* is known too well. A call from within one of the *poongas*, as the huts are called, soon silences them, for the camp is not deserted and our arrival has long been noted. Coming up to the first *poonga* one finds an old man who is hopelessly imbecile and is led about like a child. His woman looks after him and manages to collect enough food for the two. The next is occupied by the *koonki*, or doctor; Koonkoo Nutatacullie is his name. He cannot walk, for he trod on a stake and made an abscess in his heel. Of course the inevitable fur string is tied round his ankle. A hypo-

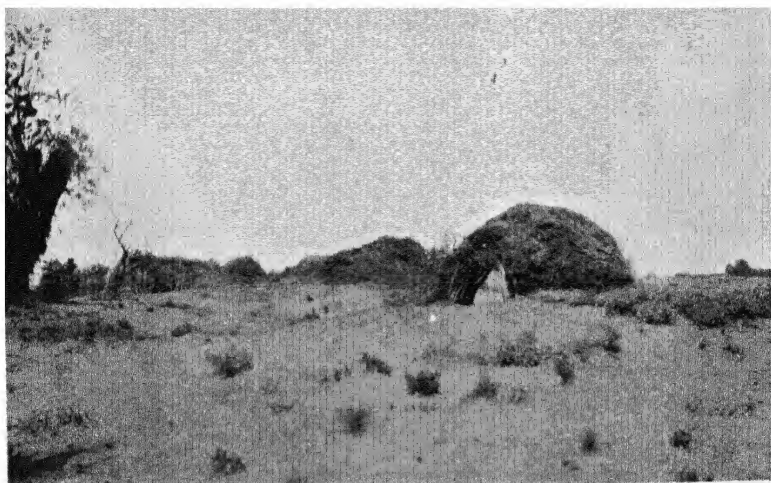


FIG. 12.—SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE HEADMAN'S *POONGA*.

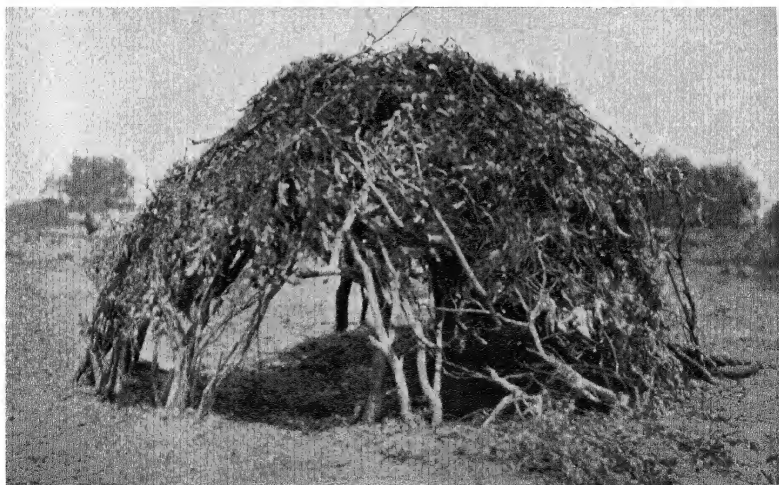


FIG. 13.—THE *WILPIE*.



dermic injection of cocaine and a scalpel will, however, let out the inflammation and in three days he will be walking again. For the native's resistance to inflammatory trouble is marked, and though the power of combating the germs of disease such as consumption, measles and smallpox is low, the opsonic index for strepto- and staphylococci is high; which means that the black's resistance to inflammation is great compared with that of the whites, although he more easily contracts other diseases.

The arrangement of the cluster is on a definite plan. To the west and north, well clear of the others, is the headman's *poonga*. It faces roughly to the north, and is placed so that he can, if he wishes, overlook all the camp, except one *poonga* which is placed a little apart and faces the east. This was built by a widow with no relatives in camp who would take her into their shelter. Another slightly detached hut is the half *poonga* assigned to the young men, in which all one side is left open, instead of having a doorway.

The *wilpie*, or shade hut, for use by the whole camp in the heat of the day, is also usually placed in front of the others. This plan was carefully carried out in the six camps which I visited (three of them deserted), but I am told that sometimes the arrangement is slightly altered. In the middle of the camp is the *dunpara* or platform, which is about five feet high, and is used to keep food and water from the dogs. Of these there seems to be no end, each man keeping about eight or ten, although there is not food enough for half that number. Often a screen of boughs stuck in the ground

is built round one side of the entrance and gives a warm place in which to sit. A fire is lit in front under shelter of the screen and gives warmth to the old men who sit there. In the deserted camps, which were evidently for summer use, a couple of *poonga* had a little *wilpie*, a yard away, and facing inwards.

Of course the proximity to water is always a requisite, and usually it is a soak, which has been sunk under the dream-conveyed advice of a moora. On the whole the camps are surprisingly clean, except for the dogs. When it gets too bad, their idea of sanitation is certainly primitive—simply to move. Everything not in immediate use is left. *Nardoo* and *munyeroo* stones<sup>1</sup> lie just where they were, *kirra* and *murrawirrie*<sup>2</sup> are thrown on the top of the *poonga*. If the owners leave them, no one else will ever interfere. Their cupboards consist of scratched holes in the sand. These, if they contain secret things, may be opened up later on, but they have made up their minds to go, and go they must. If more things are wanted, more will be made.

The Wonkonguru build their huts always on rising ground, the Dieri invariably on the flats. The materials used are the same with both tribes. Almost any herbage or squashy growth is employed as a first covering, and is piled upon the rafters; sand is then thrown on this and is gradually caked into a hard crust with the moisture of the herbage. These huts are called *mulyeroo poonga*, which means, literally, mud shade. Some of them are very well built.

<sup>1</sup> Stones used in preparing edible seeds.

<sup>2</sup> Boomerang and sword boomerang.



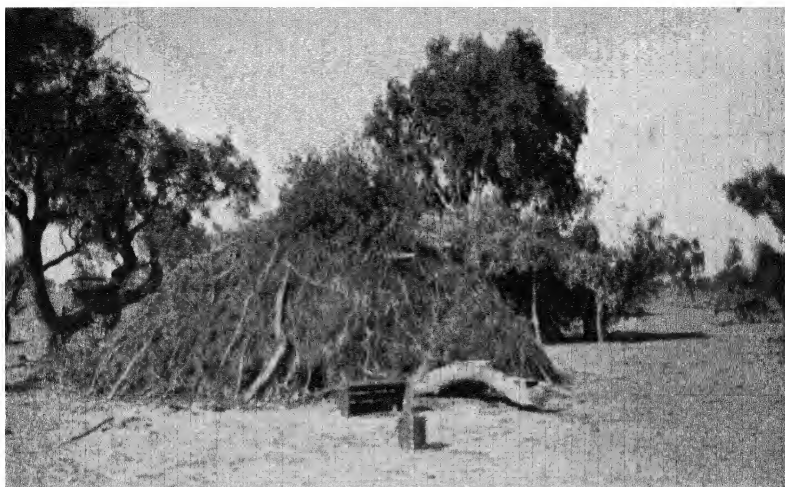


FIG. 14.—DIERI *POONGA*—BUILT AROUND A STUMP.

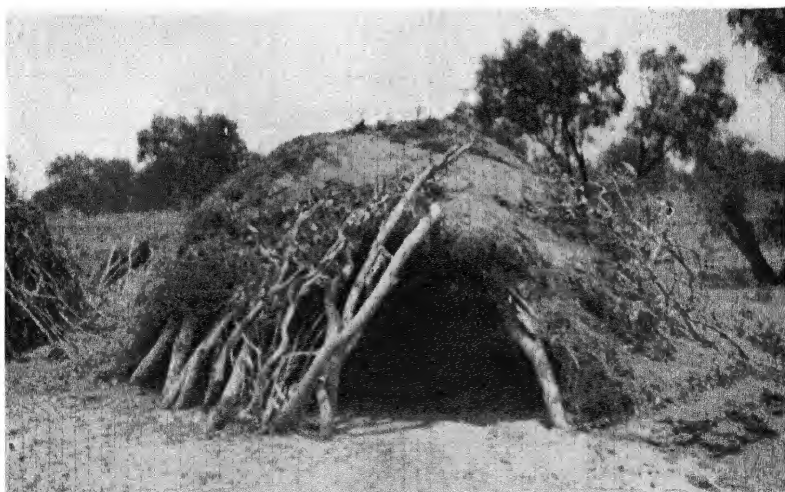


FIG. 15.—MULYEROO *POONGA*—MUD SHADE.



To make a *poonga* the workman, usually some black-fellow who specialises in hut-building, first collects as many curved tree branches as he needs. He then sinks a hole in the ground with his digging-stick to a depth of about one foot. Next he sets the stick that has the most suitable curve in this and stamps it down. Then he sets another stick in a line with it and about twelve feet away, and arranges it so that it will meet with the end of the first. He then places another at right angles to the two, and binds the three ends together with any piece of hair or fur string. This is only to keep the three sticks in place until the circle of sticks is complete. After this he completes the circle and roofs it over. What he receives in recompense for his work is usually something very small. Sometimes all he will ask is a *kirra* or some other trifle. Good *poonga*-builders are in great demand and are borrowed from one camp to another. The *wilpies*, or day shades, are built in the same way, but are usually bigger. They are just a place where the tribe can laze away the heat of the day. In this country it is so hot during the summer that I doubt if one could live in it out of the shade unless one were moving about. The *wilpie* is covered with tree branches with the leaves on, a space of about two feet high all round being left to let a draught through. If the wind is too strong, boughs are piled up on the weather side.

Nowadays a blackfellow will make a small *wilpie* at the door of his *poonga*; this usually happens when he is in disgrace, or is bad-tempered with the tribe. In this case only he and his family use it, but this is not usual. It is very common to see a circular break-wind

of boughs or bushes around the entrance, but I have only seen two or three instances of a properly built *wilpie* being attached to a *poonga*.

The great specialist in hut-building in the Mungeranie district and for miles around is Piltibunna, and he has held that position for many years. He learnt from his father and builds as his father did, but has never worked with any white man.

### WALK-ABOUT

Nowadays there is nothing of the regular touring for exchange; but formerly definite routes were followed, and, I am told, a trading party, keeping on these tracks between water-holes, went unmolested.

A man, or perhaps a man and his wife or wives and family, sometimes even a party, travelled round a particular course to trade goods, and to pass on the news. The same system of walk-about was carried on throughout a great part of Australia, for we find it very specially in Queensland, and also in Victoria and New South Wales.

Kopperamanna in the Dieri country was a great centre, and thither from all parts people came to barter their goods. Hence the name, which means literally root-hand. As the fingers all lead to the hand, so all roads lead to Kopperamanna, which seems to have been a central position and is on the east of the tract of ground that for all tribes was sanctuary. On arriving at such a place etiquette always demanded that the visitors' party should camp on the side nearest to their own country.



FIG. 16.—*Poonga* IN COURSE OF ERECTION.



FIG. 17.—BOUGHS PILED UP ON THE WEATHER SIDE OF THE *Poonga*.



Material goods were not the only traffic that was exchanged. If any of the visitors knew a fresh corroboree, he would be called upon first to train or direct his troupe and afterwards to perform. In this way corroborees are known to have spread along definite tracks. With the dance passed also the words of the song. As these were handed on from one tribe to another, each with a variation in dialect, gradually the significance of the words vanished until they became simply a string of sounds. In children of the white race exactly the same thing happens when they sing of "A consecrated cross-eyed bear."<sup>1</sup> If this were handed down verbally only, we would soon find words introduced to suit the bear (the animal) in the next line.

But to return to the walk-about. That this was on special routes is seen in the walk-about of Mulka Bill (pp. 13, 14), and it can easily be imagined how a disagreeable man with a real grievance would make trouble.

The chief things brought in from the north were soft wood shields, stone axeheads and *pitcheri*. I have even found in a deserted camp a *pirrha*, or *koolamon*, as the northern Boulia or Kalkadoon blacks would call it. This was made of the coral wood or bean tree (*Erythrina sp.*), as is also the *murrawarloo*<sup>2</sup> or shield. In return for these the hard-wood fighting poles or digging-sticks, and the red ochre would be exchanged.

One absolute necessity for travelling was water. For this reason, as well as to avoid the intense heat of the

<sup>1</sup> A consecrated cross I'd bear (hymn).

<sup>2</sup> *Murrawarloo*, literally white hand. *Warloo* = white. Thus *mungwarloo* is white *mung* or forehead, *i.e.* the widow's cap. See below, p. 153.

summer, the winter was the usual time chosen for the move. Often a man going away one winter would not be able to return until after the next rain, when the track was once more open.

### MESSAGE-STICKS

Message-sticks are frequently in use amongst the Wonkonguru, but seem to be employed chiefly for two purposes. In the first place as a token of good faith, and secondly as memory help for numbers. The blacks' command of numerals is very limited, so this latter use was quite necessary.

An example of the first is to be found in the message-sticks sent with the men of the red ochre and the *pitcheri* expeditions. These were carried to the owner of the commodity in question from the old men of the tribe that sent the messengers. Apparently they conveyed no actual message, but were simply the same as when in old days a king sent his signet ring for a token showing the messenger's genuineness, and also from whom the request was made. The real message was always in these cases given by word of mouth through the messengers.

In the second case it was sought to convey also the number of sleeps or moons before a thing would occur, or the number of men or women or old men who were expected at, say, a corroboree. The meaning of the sender was to be conveyed by various signals. Thus I was shown a stick with three notches on one end. This, I was told, meant that in three sleeps the receiver was to be ready to serve in a *pinya*.<sup>1</sup> On being asked how they

<sup>1</sup> A revenge party, literally a mob.





FIG. 18.—MESSAGE-STICKS.



would know it was a *pinya*, it was pointed out that the messenger carried balls of *kopi* (gypsum) and was painted, so that he could not be mistaken even if he said no word.

As an example I have a message-stick which was sent round by one of the Anula tribe in the far north and was accompanied by a plume of white cockatoo feathers fastened on the end of a stick. This was a call to a corroboree. It was apparently a conventional design, of crosses and v's, the cuts being rubbed in with red ochre. Showing the feathers on the stick made attendance compulsory. Similar examples are to be found amongst the people of the Lake Eyre basin.

There seem to be three classes of message-sticks amongst the Wonkonguru. First the mnemonic, where nicks are cut in the stick which mean so many moons, or men, or bags of ochre, or some meaning that the bearer supplies *viva voce* or by his appearance. The second is the conventional, where the chief idea of the native is to "make 'em pretty fella." But certain regular designs are followed and different patterns may mean exactly the same thing. The message is given by certain ways the man is painted or things that he carries, if he does not actually speak. But generally the message-stick is simply a guarantee of good faith.

Quite often the appearance of the marks themselves seems to have a significance, so the burnt-in knife-cuts on one seem to accentuate that it is a message to fight. The sticks may be coated with yellow or with red ochre. They may be cut and then burnt or they may be simply burnt. Sometimes they are dotted with minute spots, which are often enclosed without pattern in spaces,

sometimes arranged in bands, either single, double, or treble; or they may be like the leaves of trees.

These bands are said to take the place of the nicks cut in the stick and to have different meanings according to the number of conjoined bands. Thus single bands might mean women, double bands young men, and treble bands old men. The message then would run: Send so many women, so many young men, and so many old men. The appearance of the messenger would convey that it was to a corroboree or whatever it was.

The third sort of message-stick is the rarest, and it definitely shows places and things. This is apparently either to point out a direction to a given locality, or is the description of the place. Two or three of these sticks are in my possession. Dr. W. E. Roth<sup>1</sup> mentions them as being rather common in Western Queensland and gives several figures of them. The message-sticks can therefore be classified as the mnemonic, the conventional, and the pictorial.

### SIGNALS

Returning from Cowarie we were about six miles from Mungeranie as the dusk came on. Suddenly on our left a bright blaze flashed up. Ginwillie, our house-boy, said, " 'Im Cowarie blackfellow go home." He cantered across and the blaze died down. It was an obvious call to come over and tell what news there was from Crooked-foot Peter of Cowarie. A signal such as this would only be available for a very little distance, but for a longer range smoke signals could be used. The

<sup>1</sup> *Ethnological Studies*, p. 136.

blacks' fires neither blaze nor smoke. This is because in making a fire they do not place the sticks one on top of the other and light them in the middle, but two or three are put end to end. These when lighted smoulder and are gradually pushed in as they burn away, exactly like the carbons of an arc light.

When asked as to the meanings of various smokes such as dense clouds, pale columns, interrupted smoke-breaks and so on, as described by Mr. A. T. Magarey, Tallapittie the tracker told me in his own broken English that these differences had no special significance except to attract attention. For an intermittent smoke attracts the eye quicker and more certainly than a continuous one would; just as a break in a sound draws one's attention before a steady though louder noise would do so. Tallapittie explained that, just as with message-sticks, anything's meaning depends on circumstances. "You do 'um one thing mean one thing. Next time you do 'um one thing mean another thing," were his words. So if a party be expected the smoke means that party's advent. If a boy has gone bush after circumcision it means that he is there. Should they be on a hunting party, the presence of game would be signalled. However, the northern folk may be more intelligent than the Wonkonguru. The most accurate account of how many and of whom the party consisted, when they had been there, whither they went, if they had women with them or were an armed body, was all conveyed by the footprints left behind in the sand. These to the natives are an open book.

Sometimes, if it is intended to convey a more lasting

notice of the direction taken, a *kirra* or boomerang is stuck firmly into the ground and is sloped in the direction that the party has travelled. This is especially used if they have departed from the usual track.

The shaped sticks stuck into the sand on departure and spoken of as *toas* were not known by the old men of the Wonkonguru. These would have been most useful, as they described the destination sought.

The aborigine does not get lost. He may suffer from a scanty supply of food, and the want of water may tell upon him, but his methods of obtaining both food and water are so different from those of other races that where he is does not matter.

#### PERISH

The word "perish" has a special significance in this country. It is applied to those who lose their way and die from want of water. Contrary to usually accepted theories, the man who is lost does not go in a circle. Generally his horse dies first. Then he toils on. There is no shade and never a drop to drink. Sometimes he is heading straight for the water, which is hidden by some little fold of the ground. Then by obstinate bad luck, with only a few hundred yards to go, his tracks show that he has turned back on the chance of life, and once more he is out on the desolate gibbers. If you follow the marks on the ground you see where he lay under the scanty shade of a mulga tree, perhaps the only cover for miles. The pressure on the ground shows that as the sun moved round he too moved to keep the shadow. Then the madness of thirst came

upon him. He stripped off all his clothes, as they so frequently do, and he commenced to run. That was the end. He never goes far before he drops.

Mr. G. Aiston tells me how he tracked down an Afghan, taking with him a compatriot of the missing man. They were not well horsed, but had full canteens on the pack-horses. In the morning, at the soak, they found that the man had just missed the water. There they picked up his swag and what the crows had left of his horse. The next day till late in the evening they followed his unmistakable tracks, for obviously he was nearly finished. First they found his turban; further on strewed along the ground was the rest of his clothing; then the remains of the man, torn by wild dogs and picked at by the birds.

Aiston was just lying down, leaving the Afghan to fill in the grave, when he saw the last precious canteen being emptied over the sandy mound. He yelled aloud and jumped up, but it was too late. "Me make flowers grow," was the only explanation vouchsafed by the optimistic Mahomedan, whose religious scruples quite outweighed his fear of perishing. They had to camp for the night with the horses in a bush yard. Then began the two days' travel back to the soak. Without water for men or horses they just succeeded in reaching it, to find it gone salt. More digging only yielded the smallest brackish ooze, far short of satisfying the men: not touching the thirst of the horses. Too weak to carry any burdens, Aiston drove the horses in front and finished the last stage on foot. Fifteen miles out the Afghan lay down under a needle bush. Aiston recollects

laughing loudly at the tucked-up appearance of the horse, whose rib-line he could see plainly from between its hind legs. The next thing he remembers is lying under the bore-fed water trough, from whose drawn plug a grateful stream sprayed over him, and listening lazily to the beat of hoofs as the water was galloped out to the rescue of the Afghan.

The white race is dominant. It was Lew Reece who one time staggered in, dragging along the native, who would have lain down and died. Always it is the white man's endurance and the white man's grit that, if any way there is, will push through.

In hunting, the men are moving in country that they know well; being lost is then out of the question.

### HUNTING

Hunting is with the natives a matter of necessity. There is as a rule very little of the sporting element in it, the main thing being to get the food. A hunting party is always looking for tracks of almost any animal, and there are very few that are not eaten. Directly tracks are discovered they are followed up, and, if they are those of a ground animal and lead to the hole in which the animal has taken refuge, the finder starts to dig out the animal. He is usually assisted by his gin and his dogs. The implements used in digging are the so-called woman's digging-stick (called *wadna* by the Wonkonguru) and the long wooden bowl (called *pirrha*). The rest of the party in the meantime are looking for other tracks. When the animal is dug out the man usually kills it by catching it by the tail and knocking its head against



FIG. 19.—THE *WADNA* OR WOMAN'S DIGGING-STICK (4 FEET LONG).



FIG. 20.—*PIRRHA*.



FIG. 21.—DOGS.



the wall of the excavation. The natives know the habits of each animal so thoroughly that there is very little time wasted. They know how many animals should be in a hole and do not spend time in unnecessary digging. Nowadays when digging out rabbits they fill up all the entrances to a burrow except two. They dig at one and the dogs and the gin wait at the other. As the rabbits bolt out they are either knocked down by the gin or are caught by the dogs. Rabbits only came to this country about thirty years ago. I heard one middle-aged blackfellow telling his first experience with them. He was camped on the Warburton, and on leaving the camp in the morning saw this funny animal crouched under a bush. He was frightened of it, and went back to the camp to get his father. The father came out with two or three more blacks and they decided to kill it. My informant laughed as he told how they all threw their *kirras* (boomerangs) at it and knocked it over. Then the father put his spear through it, and sent one of the young men to Cowarie—about twenty miles away—to ask the whitefellow what it was. In the old days the hunting was all done by the young men and gins, but now the young men are employed on the stations. But they still keep the old men supplied with news as to whether the waters are up, out away from the permanent waters; and also let them know where tracks of game are plentiful. One of the principal and most highly prized foods is the *woma*, a sleepy snake very like a carpet snake; this is yellowish in colour underneath, and has dark green bands on the back. They grow to an average length of about nine feet. Directly

news is brought in of *woma* tracks all the camp make out (that is, if there is water), and they track the *womas* to their holes, usually a deserted rabbit burrow, where they dig them out. A fire is built straight away, and when sufficient ashes have accumulated, the *woma* is coiled up and placed in them. The whole is then covered up with sand, left for about two hours, and then taken out and eaten. It is not skinned or disembowelled, as the natives think an animal spoil that has been opened. Any small animals that are caught are cooked in this way. When hunting the larger animals—kangaroo and emu—if they are found in bush country the hunters creep up as close as they can and throw their *kirras*. If close enough to use their spears they do so, but the spear is not the universal weapon that the *kirra* is. Kangaroos are full of curiosity, and the natives take advantage of this to kill them. Directly a mob is sighted a party will break off and travel along openly and carelessly. The kangaroos will follow up two or three hundred yards behind. The party of blacks left then sneak up till within throwing distance. Emus are hunted in the same manner, but when these are found out in the open the natives put the dogs on to them. The dogs run them to a standstill and the men come up and kill them.

Wild turkey are often enticed with a lure made of a hollow root of the swamp marshmallow. The hunter hides himself in the bushes and sounds the lure until the turkey comes within striking distance. The killing of any of the larger animals or birds is a matter of great jubilation, and special methods have to be used to cook

them. A hole deep enough to take the animal is dug and a fire is lighted in it. This is kept fed until there is a heap of hot ashes about six inches deep; then another fire is built on top of the ground. The animal is put into the hole upon the first fire, and the second fire shovelled in on top. The whole is then covered up with sand and is left for about four hours. Sometimes the animal is covered over with mud, but this is not usual. It is never disembowelled or skinned.

When food is plentiful, the only parts eaten are the limbs and along the backbone; the rest is given to the dogs.

### DOGS

The first thing that attracts one's attention when visiting a native camp is the quantity of dogs. They swarm out when first you appear, but are readily cowed if the hand is raised. Once accepted at the camp, for that day at any rate you need fear no molestation. The number, however, is not fully disclosed until towards evening, when the men and women come back from their work of catching wild creatures and gathering the roots, seeds and small fruits that form the natives' sustenance.

Where they go some dogs accompany them, only, knowing they are unwelcome, one or two are all that come down to the "white fella" house at Mungeranie bore-water lagoon. Tallapittie had been a police tracker and was on that account a privileged person. His request, therefore, for a lift back to Cowarie was considered. But when it was explained by him that it

meant sharing for forty miles our none too roomy buggy with himself, his gin, their child and eight dogs, his offer was declined. Eight is by no means a large number for one man to have, but numbers were probably restricted by the fact that this was a visit of several sections of the tribe from great distances.

Everywhere one sees the greatest kindness paid to the animals, and those who know the natives well say that they are more tender to the dogs than to their own children. The old man's blanket invariably will cover them as he sits by the little fire behind the bush screen.

"Love me, love my dog," is by no means a figure of speech with the natives. Yet in spite of this kindness one sees a *kirra* thrown relentlessly at two dogs who disturb their owner by quarrelling, or who try to steal things off the *dunpara* or platform which always occupies the centre of the camp.

A greater cruelty is practised in the rearing of large litters, to increase the already over-populated pack. Even with the advent of the rabbit, animal food is scarce, for the aborigine will not catch food simply for his dogs. They get what is left over after a man has done eating, and what they can catch for themselves; of this, however, there must be very little in the neighbourhood of the camp. Nevertheless they are trained and drop their catch, for their master is armed with a *kirra*. On the whole, it is not to be wondered at that the dogs are always half starved. No trace of the wild dog can now be seen in them. Greyhound, Irish terrier, and fox terrier seem to predominate, and have but one thing in common, the scantily covered bones and half-starved

look that but ill assorts with the confidence with which they push their way to the warmth of the fire.

From the white man's point of view they are not required as watch-dogs.

### PROPERTY

Of property, as such, there is but little definite trace. One's personal possessions are respected absolutely. It is not considered right or proper to use anything that has belonged to another man. Their *kirra*<sup>1</sup> or *wadna*,<sup>2</sup> their *murrawirrie*<sup>3</sup> or their *wooroomarroo*<sup>4</sup> might lie in the fork of a tree or on the ground for ever and no one would touch them even if they were left to rot. Their store of *munyeroo* or of *nardoo* I have found lying untouched after weeks.

Jackie Jones, or Tallapittie, for instance, left at Cowarie in a deserted camp three boxes containing *munyeroo*, a net, *koori* (or mussel-shells), several *koondi tuhlas* or adzes, and a lump of *mindrie* gum. Under a piece of bark another lot of *munyeroo* was stored. They had been there a fortnight since their owners left for the corroboree at Mungeranie and would be there for a still longer time, as Mirramitta and Mount Gason were to be visited. No one would interfere with them although the native camp was barely 200 yards away, and daily the women went out to collect the food. *Nardoo* and *munyeroo* stones lay about haphazard. No one would dream of taking them. These *munyeroo* stones were always in pairs, the upper and the lower stone invariably being of the same sort of stone.

<sup>1</sup> Boomerang.

<sup>2</sup> Digging-stick.

<sup>3</sup> Sword boomerang.

<sup>4</sup> Fibre net.

It is curious in how little regard are held the implements that a man makes himself. Thus Watamunka makes *kirras* or boomerangs, and loaded with these he goes down to Kopperamanna, the long-established barter station. From there he comes back loaded with other *kirras* for which his have been given. They are better because another man made them. This trait appears in all their barterings.

Kopperamanna is the post for barter of the blacks, and has been so as far back as memory goes. Thither came from the north the soft-wood shields (*murrawarroo*), for none of this soft wood<sup>1</sup> grows amongst the Lake Eyre tribes. Sometimes also a soft-wood *pirrha* can be found. Here, too, were brought the axe-heads either from Queensland beyond Cloncurry, or from the Coast tribes in the south. For the local stone, though it chips with a sharp edge, cannot be ground and polished. Cane or light-wood for spears came from the far east. All these things were not only bartered for what the Wonkonguru and Dieri produced, such as ochre, hard wood for boomerangs, *pirrhas*, etc., but they were also exchanged amongst themselves.

Tribal possession is a well-defined entity. The celebrated Beltana deposit of ochre was the property of the Blinman aborigines, a subdivision of the Kooyiannie. To these a message-stick was sent when red ochre was required, and presents, in return for permission to mine it, followed. This is considered the "proper" ochre and is that which is always used, although plenty, hundreds of miles nearer, could easily be obtained.

<sup>1</sup> Bean tree (*Erythrina vespertilio*).



The crystalline semi-transparent gypsum is also obtainable in many places near Mungeranie, but south of Kopperamanna is the regular and orthodox place to secure it if it is required for rain-making.

Naturally this is a ceremony that often fails. It is as well for them that they have this as one of many loopholes to explain the failure.

Until the whites came the tribal boundaries were religiously kept, and it is sufficient for them that these are their lands and have been for generations. This renders still more curious the legends that the Wonkon-guru formerly lived where the Ngameni now dwell, but were pushed south by them.<sup>1</sup> They in their turn displaced the Dieri, who were pushed still further south.

### PLAYTHINGS

The Lake Eyre tribes make three different styles of ball for playing. One is a small round ball, usually about one and a half inches in diameter, and is made from burnt gypsum mixed up with water. It is made for the children. To play with it, it is gripped in the first two fingers of the hand and given a twist, causing it to spin. The game is played by several players at once, and the one whose ball spins the longest is the winner. In this game a piece of hard clay ground is used. A larger style used only by the women is made slightly flat on one side with a short piece of stick inserted to make a peg. This is made to spin in the same manner as the smaller ball. Sometimes two women will play

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Howitt. *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 45.

against one another, each spinning her ball into a *pirrha* (bowl), and the one whose ball keeps up the longest is the winner. A variation is sometimes played in which the two are made to spin in the same *pirrha*. There is then a lot of excitement as the two spinning balls collide with one other. If the *pirrha* is smooth the balls are knocked up the sides and then seem to swoop down at each other into the hollow.

A third type of ball is made for the use of men. This is as nearly round as possible, and is usually about three and a half inches in diameter. They are of gypsum, sandstone, mud, or almost any material that is easy to work. To play with these the players line up on each side of a dry clay-pan in any number, the only consideration is that the opposing sides are about equal. Each party then throws the balls along the ground to the other side, the aim being to break up the opponent's ball by hitting it when it is moving; a lot are cannoned out of play to the sides. These are sometimes left until the stock of balls is getting used up, but often they are retrieved by the small boys and put into play again. The game is fascinating and is played for hours, usually until the balls left are too few to cause any excitement. The game is then dropped and the balls usually left on the playground. They are so easy to make that it is not considered worth while to carry them away. These balls are called *koolchee*.

Another game is played with a string ball. First a net bag is made; this is stuffed with grass, hair, or fur, until a ball about four inches in diameter is made. When playing with this it is thrown from one to the other

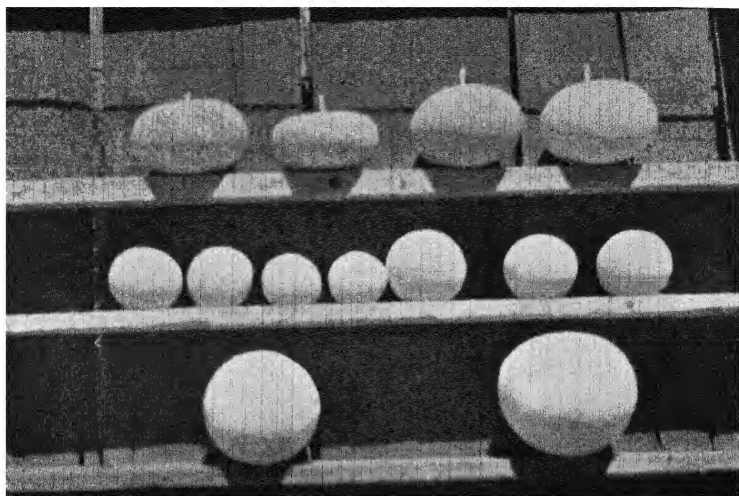


FIG. 26.—PLAYING BALLS.

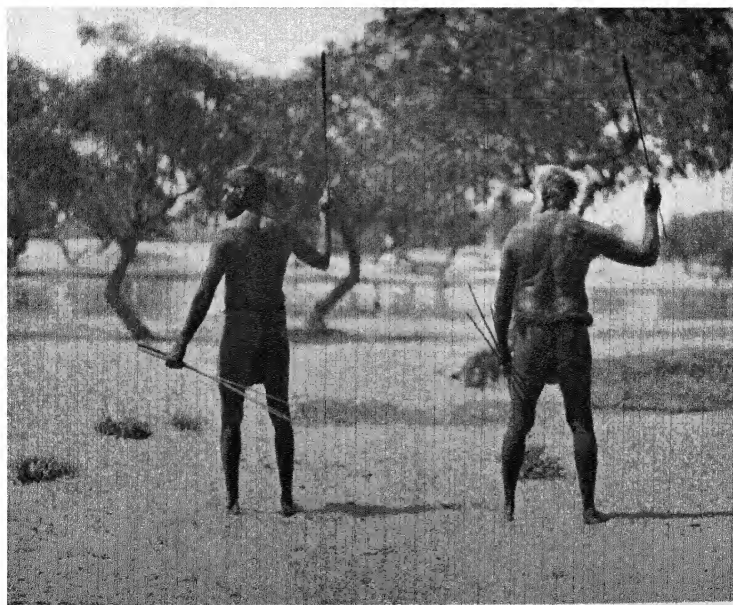


FIG. 27.—THROWING THE *KULCHERA*



and caught in the hands. The game is the same as that which white children play.

Another game played on the clay-pans by the men is with the playing-stick called by the Wonkonguru *kulchera*. This is the *wit-wit* of the Victorian tribes. In this game the blacks throw the *kulchera* with an underhand throw through a bush, so that it will ricochet off the hard ground. The one whose *kulchera* travels the furthest is the winner of the bout, and red, yellow, black and white *kulchera* are employed, so that each man may know his own. The game is played until all the *kulchera* are broken.

The clay-pans form really small lagoons, the soil being a mixture of clay and sand. They fill up with every rain exceeding half an inch, and if no animals go into them for water, the top, when they dry up, is as smooth as asphalt.

The games and trials of skill are commonest when men from other parts visit the place.

### WELCOMING CORROBOREE

For days past the promise of a visit from the Cowarie natives has been in the wind, and the Mungeranie group have been hoarding everything, so as to have plenty whilst the corroboree is going forward. *Nardoo*, sticks of *wadroo*<sup>1</sup> and *mindrie*, the fine seed of the *munyeroo*,<sup>2</sup> as well as the yams called *yaua*, are all stored in *pirrhas* against the visitors' arrival. Then we got the message that the Cowarie contingent had come and also some

<sup>1</sup> *Wadroo* and *mindrie* are edible roots.

<sup>2</sup> *Munyeroo* is a fleshy root. See p. 55.

from Mirramitta had arrived. On going the four miles over to their camp we found them prepared, painted and ready to start. They were divided into two parties, the Red Ochre party and the *Mulyeroo* or Mud group.

The Mungeranie or *Mulyeroo* men were the most numerous, and had the upper half of their bodies painted white with powdered gypsum, whilst marks scraped with the finger-nails made bands down the arms, back and chest. Upon the head was a net (*munta*) made of fibre string and stuffed with emu feathers. Into this was stuck a sharpened bone or mulga stick, to which was bound a tuft of white cockatoo feathers. Round their foreheads was fastened the whitened head-band or *charpoo*, and from each side hung to the waist two or three long tassels of white rabbit fur. To the coil of string round the waist (*dampera*) were hung cords (*wilpoo*) stained with red ochre and reaching half-way to the knee, though one or two wore tassels of rabbit fur instead. The cross-belt or belts of twisted fibre, also well ochred, and a tuft of emu feathers stuck in the belt at the back completed their adornment.

They ran out in a straggling line to bring in their women whilst we had a look at the corroboree ground. Situated just outside the camp was a swept area about thirty yards square. On one side a screen of boughs kept off the wind, and on the lee side a row of little fires warmed the spectators, who crouched around with innumerable dogs. Then from the distance rose the high-pitched, droning chant. The line of performers was running out in front for twenty yards, then, marking

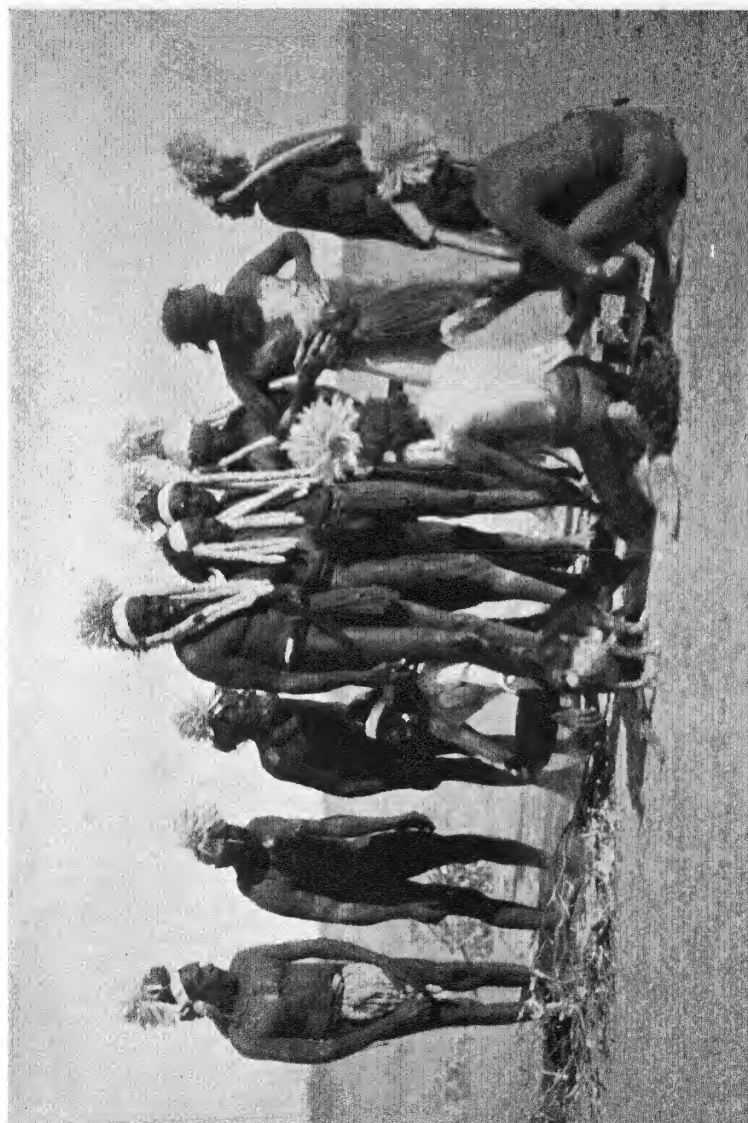


FIG. 28.—PREPARING FOR CORROBOREE.







Dintibunna	Neltalima	Carunta	Dinnabillie	Tallapittie
Kirramurakoo	Mowilliepedicha			

FIG. 29.—PREPARING FOR CORROBOREE. KIRRAMURAKOO PAINTING MOWILLIEPEDICHA.



time with high raised steps, they turned about and faced the motley crowd that followed. Women and dogs comprised this group and were guarded on each side by one performer. So the men advanced, alternately coming forward and then pausing to let the followers overtake them, all the while beating time with two *kirras* held behind them and chanting,



always bringing in the *wirru* just as they turned about, and they then ran forwards.

In the meantime there advanced from the other side the Red Ochre men, conveying their women. They were decorated similarly, except that their faces, hair and beards were spotted all over with white flecks mixed with small green parrot feathers. Instead of the chest being white it was red-ochred, and a black band ran down the spine and chest.

Advancing they came forward in the same fashion; near the corroboree ground the two groups met. The Red Ochre visitors opened out from their women to let the Mud men (*Mulyeroo*) come through. At each end of the ground they sat down, the women joining the spectators around the fires.

A short wait and then a man, smeared all over with white gypsum, jumped to his feet at one end of the ground, and waving a tuft of eagles' feathers chanted with high-pitched nasal intonation "*He-e-e-e-ey.*"

After a little pause six or eight men got up on both

ends of the ground and advanced with high-stepping action (*killena*) to the opposite end, all the time singing, " *Yoo mádje dova, Yoo mádje dova.*"

With a " *wir-r-r-u* " they turned about and repeated the same thing again and again. Gradually one and then another dropped out until only a couple were left at either end. A low-toned " *hough* " brought them to a standstill, when all sat down. In a few minutes the ceremony was commenced again. This time three men on each side started off walking with their knees much bent, and shaking them inwards and outwards (*koomana*). They were joined by others until once more all were on the move, now and then pointing with gestures towards the east. They paused again, and then once more the waving of the eagles' plumes called them up; and so it kept on and on until day began to break.

The explanation is that there was a moora who had picked up an emu's tracks near Mirramitta Lake and followed them down to Mungeranie. From there they led him to Port Augusta. Here they doubled back to Mungeranie again, and on to Koonchera the emu ran and the moora still followed. He lost the pad, but picked it up again, and as the day broke he found it leading him straight to the fresh water of Coongy Lake.

Thus the emu led the moora to this hitherto unknown water, and here the corroboree appropriately terminates with the dawn. So until morning the dance is kept going, until, wearied out, they coil themselves up in their huts to sleep well into the day.

On coming to the Mungeranie camp one morning after the arrival of the Cowarie contingent we were

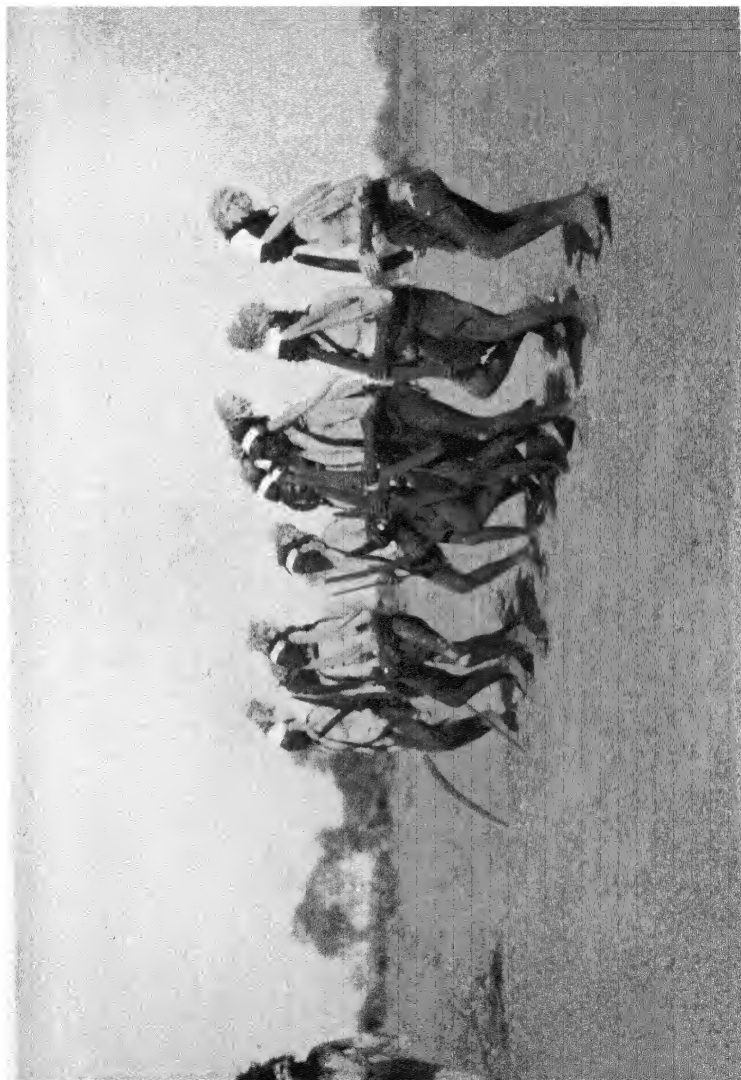


FIG. 30.—THE *MINDANAU* CORROBOREE.



met by Murrapitcheroo, who earnestly asked us not to go down yet, as all was not ready. Eight women were to be seen surrounding the Cowarie *pinnaru*,<sup>1</sup> who appeared to be carefully instructing them in their parts. Murrapitcheroo entreated us not to go near them, and he himself kept back, for he said, "Me not old enough yet." His age might be fifty, but since youth he had been driven from his home at Kalamurina and had possibly missed some stages in promotion. In a few moments he said, "You come now."

On the opposite side to where the welcoming corroboree had been held we found a little group of men and women. The women wore the bunch of strings that hangs from the cord round the waist, much larger than that worn by the men. They also had a tuft of white feathers on the head and on each arm, below the shoulder. A white band of gypsum surrounded the eyes and dipped down along the ridge of the nose, through the septum of which a long pelican's bone was thrust. The chest was red-ochred, and over that three broad white bands dipped down from shoulder to shoulder. Four, sometimes three, white bands, with red ochre between, came straight down over the breasts. A Cowarie belle in the middle of the group wore a collar round her neck. Some had on the white *charpoo*, but others had ochred fibre strings round the forehead. These were all seated in a curve in front of a low screen where sat the audience. The *pinnaru*, with *kirras* gripped in the middle, clicked the two ends repeatedly together to keep time throughout, giving vent to a high-pitched nasal "Ah-a-h-a-h"

<sup>1</sup> Headman.

to call them up. The women got to their feet, even the very fat Cooriebakupoontatagunta, without assistance from their arms, and formed up in a crescent, facing the audience. At their backs was another high screen about seven metres long and three or four metres high. Still the drone of the song went on to the reiterated chant of "*Rinna hapa, rinna hapa, rin-n-n-na*," now high and now low in tone. The women, very slightly imitating the high stepping of the men, advanced. Their hands were clasped in front, and constantly they kept up a stroking movement on the abdomen. They retired, advanced and retired again. Then from behind the high screen there pranced the most phenomenally thin man. In his hand was a long stick. The body and upper part of the arms were yellow with *aracopa* or yellow ochre, and on his head was a tight-fitting cap. Round his eyes, down the upper arms and on each side of the mid-line of chest and abdomen ran double lines of dots of eagle's down stuck on with fat (not blood). The down was whitened with gypsum and the effect heightened by a band of charcoal and fat down the middle between the double bars on the body. He danced with the high knee action down the front of the line of women, now and then pausing to bend forward and, stretching out his neck, give a *Coo-coo*. This went on for a little, when from behind the screen came a tall man, Mowilliepedicha. His ornamentation of eagle's down consisted of three bars across the face, and also of two double bars from shoulder to ankle, coming in and then going out again opposite the end of the breast-bone. On the inner side of each ankle a little bunch of box leaves





FIG. 32.—DRESSED FOR THE WOMEN'S CORROBOREE.



FIG. 3.—THE MEN BEHIND THE SCREEN.



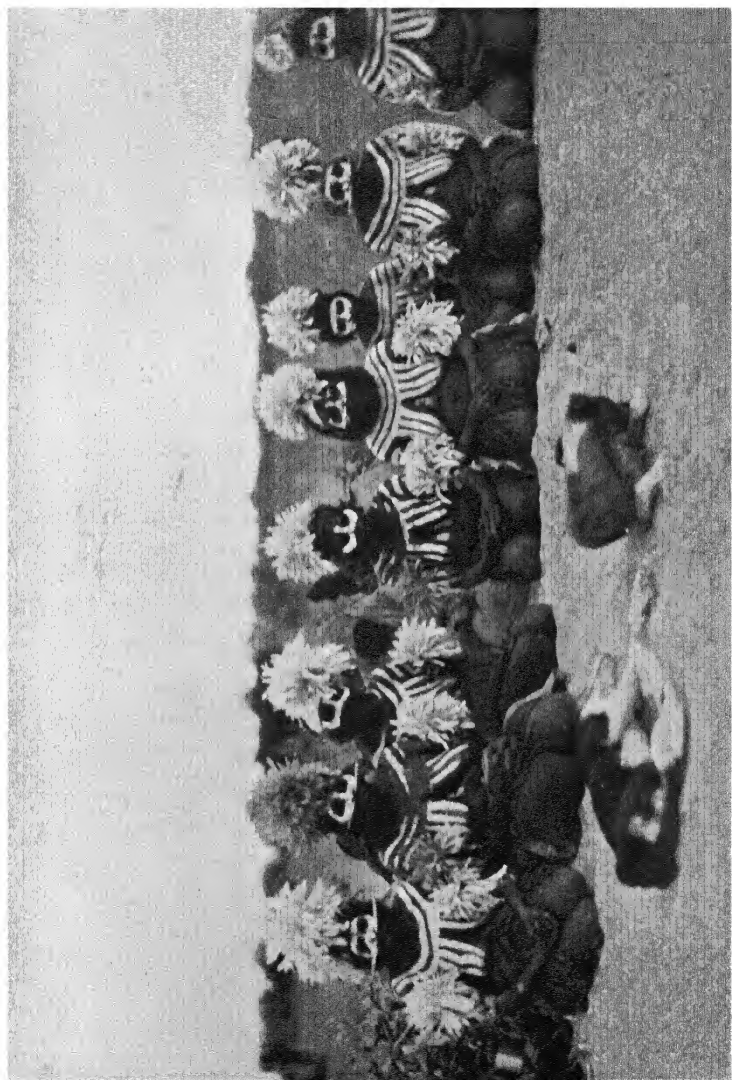


FIG. 34.—SEATED IN A CURVE.



was tied, which rustled on moving, for he represented a *moora*, and without the rustling no one would know he was there, as he would be invisible.

His high stepping was most exaggerated and he stamped his feet down fiercely. Another man followed him with narrower eagle's-down bands coming only to the knees; and yet another came out. All the men except the first yellow man had the little bunch of box or coolibah leaves at the ankles. The four men then made a line in front of the eight women, and with them advanced and retired. The yellow man excited great amusement by *coo-cooing* to everybody, including the audience. Finally the women all turned inwards and encircled the men. Then bending down from the waist they gazed for some seconds at the ground. This ended the performance. The explanation of the ceremony is as follows: Some *mooras* were travelling through the Wonkonguru country, when four of the men died from starvation. The women went on, but in the night the four who had died followed. When they overtook the survivors they tried to attract their attention, but were unable to make themselves visible, for they were dead. One of them called constantly, "*Coo-coo, Coo-coo,*" which is the call like a pigeon to say, "Plenty of food, Plenty of food." The others tied the leaves round their ankles so that the rustling noise should attract attention. Glad to hear once more from their dead, the survivors surrounded them and bent down to hear the sound more plainly.

After the performance stopped the various impedimenta were carefully collected. The head and arm

plumes were removed and the nose-bones pulled out. Even the rustling ankle-bunches were put away for another time. The down spots with which the men's stripes were made were individually picked off and stored against future needs. I pressed them to tell me where all these were kept pending further use. The man I asked could not or would not understand, till at last he indicated the inside of his *poonga*, where they were apparently buried in the sandy floor. In that welter of man and dog they would have been safe as far as I was concerned.

"*Coo-coo*," said the yellow man in farewell as we parted. "Plenty food, plenty food," meant the call; and we went on to break into our tinned meat and sample it.

### CORROBOREE DECORATIONS

The head decorations in use during corroborees are very carefully manufactured. First is secured the bone of an emu's leg, which is sharpened at each end. It is about as thick as a slate pencil and is about 22 cm. long. It is the same bone that is used for perforating the skin of the arm, thigh or scrotum in the rain-making ceremony, and also in the corroboree for producing a good harvest of lizards or carpet snakes (*woma*).

Instead of this is sometimes used a stick sharpened into a blunt point, made of dead-finish<sup>1</sup> or of mulga. Next emu feathers are bound together in bundles of about 1.5 cm. in diameter. These bundles have bound on to them split feathers that have been partly stripped

<sup>1</sup> Dead-finish is an acacia so named.

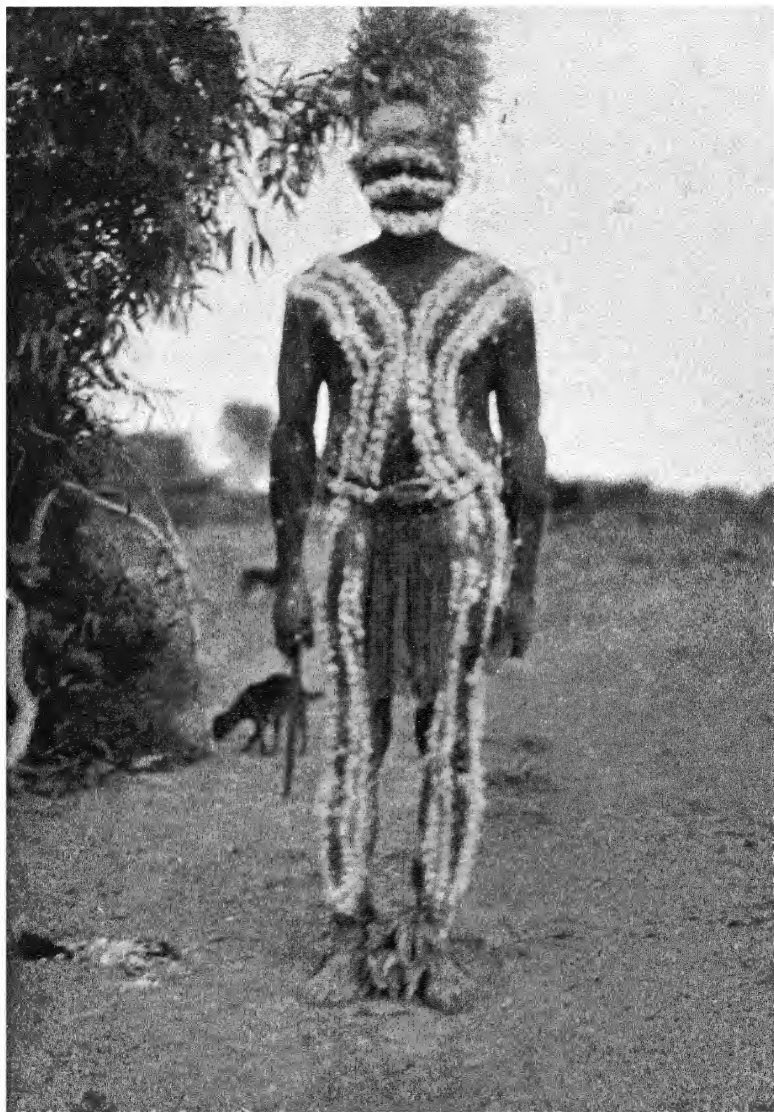


FIG. 35.—MOWILLIEPEDICHA.





off their quills. The whole of these emu feathers are then tied firmly on to the bone or stick. This is stuck either into the *munta*, or fibre net of emu feathers worn on the head, or into the *charpoo*, or head-band.

The feathers used at the *mindarie* corroboree, at which we were present, were from the white cockatoo, but Leach's black cockatoo mixed with the delicate owls' plumes are also used. When owls' feathers alone are employed the plume is called *wumpigena*.

The *charpoo* may be 5 cm. across or anything up to 12 cm., but the breadth, I was told, is a matter of taste and does not in any way depend upon the rank or age of the wearer. In making the closely woven fabric of the head-band a quill is employed, to one end of which the string may be twisted, or else stuck on with *mindrie* pitch. A series of long loops is threaded at each end of the *charpoo*, and through these are strung stout fibre strings, which tie at the back of the head. The pounded-up *kopi*, or gypsum, is moistened in a *pirrha* and then plastered thickly on the head-band in two or three layers. In the *mindarie* corroboree the *charpoo* had attached to it long tassels on each side. These are the *thippa* of the Dieri, and each consists of three, 40 cm. long, rabbit tassels. They are made by taking first a long cord, at one extremity of which a narrow strip (6 cm. long) of white rabbit fur is made fast by turning in the end and twisting together the hair. The strip is wound round the cord and firmly tied at the other end. The next strip overlaps the tie, and so they are continued until the whole cord is covered, leaving over sufficient to make fast to the *charpoo*. In the old days

the tails of the bandicoot were used, and as many as fifty went to make one tassel.

At some performances the tassels are put on independently of the *charpoo*. Then they are three in number and are fastened on to a band, one group of three at each side and one group at the back. The band is made of a number of strands of string placed longitudinally. Round this a further ball of string is wound transversely.

In this way a solid layer is made; the material is of fur string, fibre string or hair string, according to which is most convenient. But now substitutes of civilised material are sometimes used. Hair or fibre string, however, continues to be the commonest thing in use. Cross-belts, sometimes one and sometimes two, are worn across one shoulder and under the opposite arm. They consist of from twenty to twenty-five strands of fibre string, which is either soaked in crushed red ochre that has been moistened in water, or it has the powder rubbed in. The length of the cross-belt is calculated by winding the ball of string round one hand and one foot, the distance apart of the hand and the foot giving the length of the cross-belt. At one end of the belt a tie is twisted round to hold the whole together. This is done by turning back the end of the cord that has been used in the manufacture, twisting it several times round the belt and tying off by passing the end under the other twists.

Sometimes a broken-off piece of string is used for the other loop of the cross-belt. When finished the whole is curled into a loose twist to keep it from tangling.

Round the waist many coils of fur or fibre string are rolled, forming a girdle called *damperra*. The similar

hair belt sometimes has the green feathers of the shell parrot (*Melopsittaca undulata*) worked into it. This hair belt is given to the young men when initiated and is 250 metres in length.

From the front of the *dampera* hang the fibre strings of the *wilpoo*, which are 40 or 50 cm. long; sometimes rabbit-tail tassels are used for this also. In the back of the *dampera* is stuck the *wurta wurta* (Dieri), which consists of rolls of emu feathers which have other emu feathers sticking out from them, and the whole is bound together. A newly initiated man or sometimes another will wear his *coorietoorooka* or sign of initiation. This is a mussel shell (*Unio*) polished and threaded on a string. It is usually worn attached to the pubic tassel, but may be round the neck or tied to the beard. Formerly the *coorietoorooka* was a piece of a sea-shell cut oval (the one I have is probably *meleagrina*, or *Melo æthiopica*), but these have nearly all vanished after being passed on from father to son.

## CHAPTER III

### ANIMALS AND PLANTS

#### CROW

THE crow, like the poor, ye have always with you. At Marree (the ideal typhoid breeding ground) he shares, with the scavenger kite, the post of refuse-gatherer. "Caw, caw," he cries as he hops around, looking at everything, picking even maggots from carcasses and the rubbish from Afghan backyards. Quite unlike is the silent swoop of his competitor, the kite, who is as voracious though much less persistent in his efforts.

Far out, even on the distant gibbers, the crow you never lose; and when camp is broken he will be the first to visit the site to see what has been left behind.

Always hungry, always greedy, he waits round those who are about to perish, be it man or beast, ready to hasten the inevitable, or in any case to be well in time for the feast. He is persevering enough, for it is on record that his powerful beak chipped through a china nest-egg, but his disappointed remarks have been left to the imagination. In the heat of summer, which claims many victims for the crow to feed upon, he is one of the earliest to succumb. Whether it is his jet feathers, or his omnivorous and often carrion diet, I cannot say, but one of the first to drop out of the tree, when the thermometer mounts to 120° F., will be the black coat.

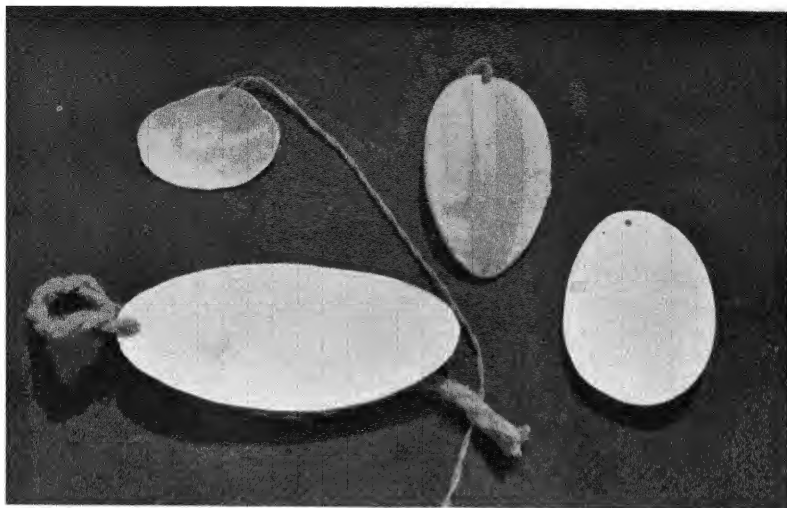


FIG. 36.—THE *COORIETOOROOKA*.



FIG. 37.—THE CROWS.



Yet, although never a favourite, his use is undoubted, and the few lambs and kids that he helps to kill are those that under any circumstances would perish.

Above all he is one of the few birds that eat maggots, and so helps to keep down the plague of blowflies.

The kite recalls memories of Bombay, where he gathers from all sources, whether it be from the dead, exposed upon the Towers of Silence, or from the offal of the streets. And yet there is something impressive about the steady, floating sailing of the kite, so different from the quick flapping of the black wings, and the inquisitive poking into corners, which rivals the mischievousness of the proverbial jackdaw. Billy Welsbey at any rate would say so. He was camping out near Ooroowillanie, and in the morning started to clean his false teeth, which he stood on a stump beside him. A crow, dazzled by the gleam of the ivories, pounced upon them. Billy pursued with desperate cries. For two miles they went, when Billy had to give it up. Now he shoots crows on sight.

### WATER

North and west of old Jack Ward's place on the Kalla-koopah is the *mickrie* country. Here all the fresh water obtainable is derived from soaks. The galah scrapes in the sandy bed of the creek and wins a drink. The crested pigeon scratches at the edge of the salt lagoon, and there oozes up a flow of sweet water that will remain fresh until the next day. The dingo has learnt the same trick. In the Tumpawarrina, little white patches are to be seen, rising to about three or four inches above

the sandy track of the creek. If these are scraped away, a hole about six inches in diameter is uncovered. Jack Ward tells me that he put his hand down the hole. When it had reached to about arm's length he was gripped by a crab. It proved to be one of the fresh-water crabs, a good six inches across, and it had fully a couple of gallons of water in the hole which dilated below. Thousands of years ago the inland sea of Australia was shut off. The crabs are some of the vestiges that remained behind.

Needle bush (*Hakea leucoptera*), Red Mallee (*Eucalyptus oleosa*) and even the Box (*E. microtheca*) afford another means of procuring water. Their roots are dug up, cut into short lengths, and placed to drain in a *pirrha* or wooden bowl. Quite a quantity of fluid is yielded that has been stored up by these plants. It is not very nice to the taste, but in that dry sandy desert any fluid that is drinkable is good. The aborigines assert that sometimes they know where to sink for a soak because the moora tells them in dreams. This, Koonkoo Nutatacullie, the medicine man, tells me, was the origin of the soak in the bed of the Derwent about four miles north-east from Mungeranie. A moora in a dream told a man where to sink. He sank where directed and found the water. At two places, half a mile and a mile and a half away, Crombie, though not having any moora to warn him in a dream, sank and also got water.

#### SKIN WATER-BAGS

Water-bags were, and still are to a limited extent, made from the skins of animals. Nearly any animal was





FIG. 38.—SOAKS.

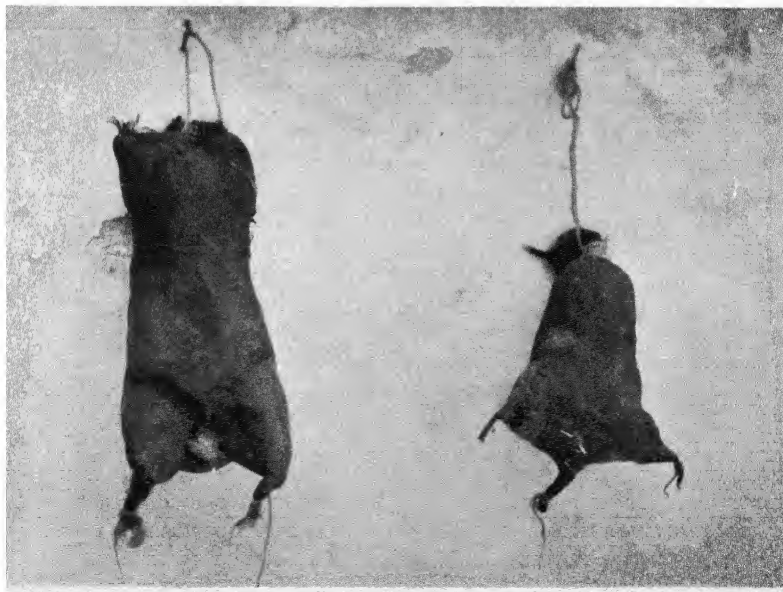


FIG. 39.—SKIN WATER-BAGS.



used except the dog. To prepare a skin the animal was opened at the throat and the cut continued around the neck until the skin was cut right around. The skin was then turned back until the front legs were skinned to the first joint. It was then cut round and the feet were pushed through the skin of the upper part of the leg. The process was continued until the animal was completely skinned, care being taken to keep all necessary holes as small as possible. All the openings except the one at the neck were then tied up with fur string or pinned firmly together with a rib bone of the animal skinned, and then tied under the bone. Next the skin was blown up tightly through the neck part.

A good deal of the hair is plucked off whilst the skin is being turned inside out, and the fur that is left is singed off, very great care being taken not to burn the skin. The whole is then immersed in an astringent fluid made from acacia bark, called *yearda*, and left for two or three hours. It is then blown up again, and the neck tightly tied and the whole left to dry. When dry it is ready for use.

From a white man's view-point the bags are of little use, as the water goes putrid in a very short time, but the blacks use them a lot. Some made from a kangaroo skin would hold about five gallons of water, but the usual size, before rabbits came into the country, was that of a wallaby or kangaroo rat. Nowadays they are nearly always made from a rabbit skin.

## VEGETABLE FOOD

Although the country looks barren enough, to those who know where to look food is abundant.

When a rain comes the whole place is a garden of flowers growing breast-high and making even the stony gibbers a picture. This wealth of colour springs from roots and also from seeds. The former are deep-growing and succulent stems, for they must hold the moisture of life. The latter have always a hard shell to protect them from the heat. It is for this reason that the cockatoos abound, for their strong bills make short work of the buck bush seeds, or the stout covering of the *nardoo*. This *nardoo* is one of the natives' staple foods. When the rains flood the clay-pans to at least 8 cm., in two or three days its little leaves can be seen like a four-leafed clover floating upon the surface.

These are anchored by a slender stem to the thick rhizomes which spread laterally upon the clay-pan. The thin roots extend far below. The *nardoo* seeds cluster about the surface stems upon the face of the clay-pan. When the rain ceases and the water dries up, the *nardoo* leaves wither away and the dark brown seed falls away from its stalk. The surface of the clay-pan, if no cattle or birds have disturbed it, is at first as smooth as an asphalt path. The seeds are collected by sweeping them up into a *pirrha* or wooden bowl with a bunch of twigs. They are flattened from side to side and about .5 cm. in diameter. If the thick, smooth casing is removed they are seen to be full of a yellowish powder

which has a rather bitter taste. The seeds are pounded up on a stone called *piddinie*.

A trailing vine with a small yellow flower creeps over the neighbouring bushes. It is the native cucumber and has a fruit which somewhat resembles that of a gooseberry, with a green and white colouring that goes yellow when ripe. Like the gooseberry, it is covered with soft prickles, and it may be up to 5 cm. in length.

*Mindrie*, of course, has its principal use in supplying the gum which is used in fixing cutting tools on to the wooden handle, in making the grip to knives and in hafting axe-heads. It has a thick root about 2 cm. through with a central brown core .5 cm. in diameter. The softer surrounding part is quite palatable when cooked. It is from this root that the *mindrie* gum is obtained.

A small yam called *yaua* comes up after the rain and is much prized by the natives, who scatter magic stones (*yelka*) to make it grow. It is from 1 to 1.5 cm. across and, I am told, has a nutty taste.

The wild spinach has a broad leaf, which is quite different from the long, slender leaf of the wild cabbage. Both are eaten, but are not found in great quantities. Coming in from the camp a woman, Wadnacoorie, which means broken shell, brought in an armful of a green creeper, with single fusiform leaves, a feathery white flower, and a green three-sided pod. She called it *willa*. Stripped off the stalk, the leaves and flower are not bad eating. The pod also is opened and its soft seeds and contents are used for food.

The pounding stone is called *koolkie* (*coolkee* or *kulki*).

The *piddinie* ranges in size from huge slabs two feet by fifteen inches, down to small ones about nine inches by six inches; the ideal shape being as near oval as possible. The larger sizes are only used in the camp and are very often left behind when shifting. The natives nearly always have a standing camp at all the waters in their country, so that anything they leave at a camp will be there when they return to it, and in all probability they left stones at some previous time at the camp to which they are going. The smaller stones are carried with them and are used as occasion requires. A lot of friendly rivalry was shown over the smaller *piddinies*. The blackfellow who had the smoothest and cleanest-shaped *piddinie* was a person of some little conceit. A blackfellow gave me one some years ago as a very great favour. He was leaving the camp and did not want it any more. This was oval-shaped, with a hollow about three-quarters of an inch deep in it, and was as smooth as if polished. The *koolkie* to go with this was about three inches by two and a half inches and was almost as smooth as glass. Every native woman that has seen it since has wanted it.

When pounding seeds, the woman has her *pirrha* on her left side filled with *nardoo*. Picking up the seeds with her left hand, she scatters them on top of the *piddinie*, at the same time pounding with the *koolkie* in her right hand; the action of both hands seems automatic to watch. In pounding she gives the *koolkie* a twist that works the pounded meal over the edge of the *piddinie* into a *pirrha* placed to receive it.

When enough seed has been pounded to make a cake



FIG. 41.—*MUNYEROO* PLANT.





the meal is mixed with water and is cooked in the ashes. The resulting damper is of the colour of ashes, and is very doughy and sodden in appearance.

*Munyeroo*, the vegetable next, in importance, is a fleshy root that grows in the sand-hills. The plant comes to a height of about eighteen inches and will cover an area of about three square yards, and is covered with a great number of bright yellow flowers. This plant is used as food almost as soon as it comes out of the ground; the blacks either eat it raw or cook it on the coals, and when it has seeded they gather the seeds. As the flowers are dying off the plants are torn up and placed in heaps on the clay-pans, where they are then left to dry. When properly dry the women beat the heap to knock out the seeds. These are carefully swept up and winnowed by shaking from one *pirrha* to another. The resulting seed is very like gunpowder in appearance, and is then carried away for use when needed. It is called "*bowa*."<sup>1</sup> To prepare it for eating, the women use a different mill from that used for *nardoo*, and call it "*mudda*." The ideal shape is about eighteen inches long by about twelve inches wide. It has usually two grooves, one on each side, running its full length. The *mudda* is packed up underneath with sand until there is room to place a *pirrha* or wooden bowl under its edge. *Bowa* is sprinkled on the top, and a *pirrha* of water is placed handy to the left side. The gin then takes a triangular-shaped flat stone that has been worn to fit the grooves in the *mudda* and is called *muddathirrie*. With her right hand she

<sup>1</sup> Howitt and Siebert give *bowa* and *pana* as general terms for seed food.

slides the *muddathirrie* backwards and forwards in the groove in the *mudda*, and with her left hand she keeps the *bowa* wet by sprinkling with water from the *pirrha*. The result is a dark paste which is either eaten as it comes from the *mudda* or is cooked in the ashes. It has about the same appearance as *nardoo* damper when it is cooked, and it certainly does not look palatable, though the blacks seem to like it. I had a woman grinding some here yesterday so that I could take a picture of the process. After she finished she invited three little black children to eat what she had ground, and they cleaned it up without waiting for a second invitation.

The *bowa* is cleaned of sand by shaking the *pirrha* until the sand goes to the bottom, and the clean seeds on top are then raked off into another *pirrha* or on to the *mudda*.

These stones are also used to sharpen stone tomahawks. The tomahawk is rubbed up and down in the groove, in fact possibly the groove is originally made in this way. The upper stone, *muddathirrie*, is used as a rasp in shaping up wooden weapons.

*Wadroo*, a species of thick root, is the third in importance. It is an annual bush that grows on the flooded ground in swamps and has a yellow pea-shaped flower. When the bushes are about eighteen inches high the blacks sink a hole on the edge of the clump, about two feet deep, and work in towards the plants. The roots are thus exposed. These are usually about three feet long by about half an inch thick, and they are taken out and broken into lengths of about twelve inches for convenience in carrying. They are eaten raw or cooked

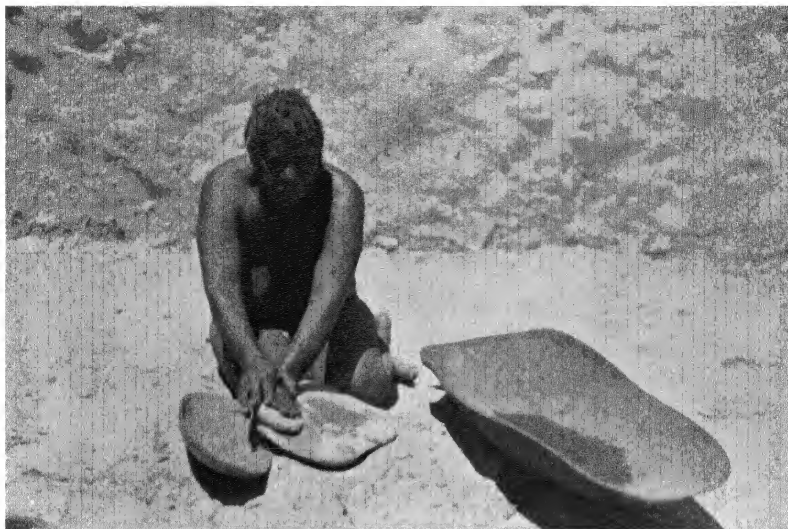


FIG. 42.—GRINDING *MUNYEROO*.



in the ashes, the taste being very like parsnip when cooked. *Wadroo* is more of a luxury than *nardoo* or *munyeroo*, as it only grows in the winter after a rain big enough to fill the swamps. Other seeds used are the bladder salt-bush, box tree seed, and mulga tree seeds. These are all ground on the stone *mudda*.

### DINGOES

Animal food is much scarcer than vegetable, and here the black's inimitable skill as a hunter plays its part.

A vast increase in the number of wild dogs or dingoes has followed the advent of the whites, and in spite of the Government bonus for their destruction, they are becoming very common. The pay is 7s. 6d. for the scalp and tail. The doggers must produce the prick ears and the white tail tuft, which are burnt in the presence of the official, in order to secure their docket. With the commencement of July, when the pupping season begins, all the aborigines scatter to go dogging, as it is called. Formerly it was a great trouble to get them to take the scalp, as they feared it would spoil the pup for eating. But now they get more cunning and readily kill the pups but spare the mother to "Get 'em more pup." Professional doggers are attached to most stations and make quite a living at the game. The unprincipled amongst them sometimes make a good thing out of the aborigine, to whom the white man's currency is an unfathomed mystery, one pound or perhaps a bag of flour being given for eighty or ninety scalps. When a camp is vacated the wild dog generally visits it, disputing precedence with

the crow. He is more cautious, however, and to catch him the bait is best lightly buried or the remnants put in a sardine tin mixed with strychnine. This they greedily take, sniffing around and scraping up the buried morsels. The dogger returning in a few days easily finds his prey. On the Cooper as many as forty from forty baits have been taken.

The aborigines track the female dog to a hole in the ground, often an enlarged rabbit burrow. This they dig out, and kill the occupants with a spear. Four is the usual litter, and the mother looks after them for the first three months. After that she will forsake them, often when at a distance from water, but she always selects the weediest pup and takes him with her, looking after him until he is fully grown.

White dingoes are by no means uncommon, and black ones are also found. Like all the creatures of the wild, they are most curious and will follow a man for miles on the gibbers. A white one tried to keep up with our motor near Ooroowillanie, but was soon left behind.

Dingoes will never attack a man if he is alone, but their mournful moan at night is apt at first to be rather disquieting. They do not usually hunt in packs, but as a rule in pairs. Sometimes, however, a number of them may have come together, so Mr. Aiston tells me. He once saw fourteen trying to cut off a calf from its mother near Mirramitta. The cow stubbornly refused to let them get between her and the calf, and though three were shot the rest doubtless returned later on.

## NATIVE CAT

The aborigines must always have some legend to account for the creation of every animal.

As a boy I remember well the native cats around our house within two and a half miles of Melbourne. Now they have been wiped out. There are two varieties, the white spots being on a black or on a yellow ground.

The legend that Mr. Waterhouse of Beltana told me says that when the aborigines first saw the native cat's tracks they were very surprised, as they were made by no animal that they knew. They carefully tracked it and, forming a circle, gradually closed in. Then they saw it—a small animal whose smooth black coat had no mark whatever. They all threw their spears, piercing it in many places. Ever after the cat was spotted with white marks, which are the places where he was struck by the spears. This is the story. It is interesting to note that they were armed with spears rather than boomerangs. The former disappear with the big trees, both from the difficulty of getting straight timber, and also from the impossibility of throwing a boomerang perfectly direct to the mark, whereas a spear goes straight.

## EMUS

Anything moving on the desolate gibbers or sandy wastes attracts attention, and man, as much as any, comes in for the curiosity of the denizens of the wild. The dingo will follow a buggy or a motor at a distance for miles, the *brolga*,<sup>1</sup> or “native companion,” is inquisitive

<sup>1</sup> *Brolga* is the *Antigone Australiana*.

though he runs no risks, but the most foolish is the emu. Near the camp at Mungeranie I noticed little flags stuck on trees. These, I was told, attract the attention of the bird, which circles round them and may be dispatched with a *kirra*. Emus do not appear to be very common now. Several times we saw single specimens, but only once, over near Ooroowillanie, did we come across a mob.

The obsidian bombs which one sometimes picks up on the gibbers are known as emu's eyes, and are supposed to have a magical effect upon the bird, making it go blind. Old Piltibunna tells me the following method is used in their capture. When the emus come down to drink, a cordon of aborigines forms along one side of the lagoon and lights little fires on which they put salt-bush to make a smoke. Gradually the cordon contracts towards the water. Then suddenly two men, one from each end of the line, rush out and throw a little feather pocket containing emu eyes or obsidian bombs at the birds. These become confused as they are blinded, rush into the water and are easily secured. As a great favour Piltibunna gave me a nest containing three emu eyes, so now I can catch emus whenever I like.

But if the emu, or the *broлга*, is uncommon, the reverse holds good of the galah. The time to see them is at daybreak near water.

#### GALAHS <sup>1</sup>

The sun has not yet risen, and the coldest time of the twenty-four hours is upon the lagoon.

<sup>1</sup> *Cacatua roseicapilla*.



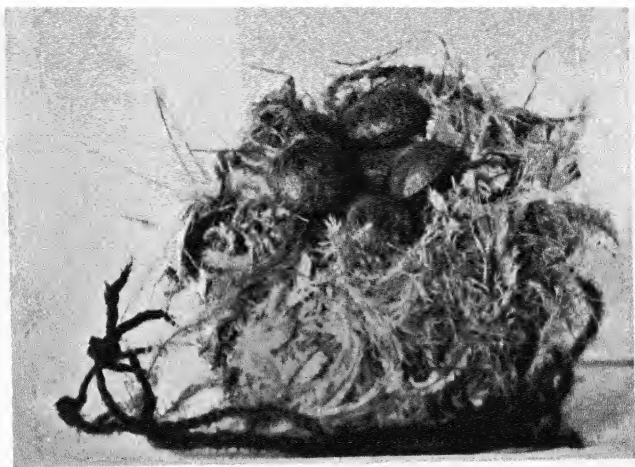


FIG. 44.—EMU EYES.



FIG. 45.—GALAHS.



Stray pink birds flutter from one tree to another, or drop to the water's edge to drink before seeking their food. Each tree has its load, looking like a bright fruit on the stripped top branches or on the dead trunks. Then suddenly the petulant squawks of the flutterers are interrupted by the whirr of a thousand wings, which is followed in a few seconds by a tumult of shrieks. The first company of galahs is off, on its way to the feeding-grounds. One or two find themselves in the wrong party and drift back with impatient screams to seek their perch anew. Again in a few minutes there is the rush of many wings, followed by the deafening, untuneful callings of the flight. They rush onwards like a rose-pink cloud, then, as they turn, the light from the east strikes the back and wings, which gleam a soft grey-blue against the early morning sky. . . . The last party has shrilled its way outward. The silence of day settles over the lagoon, broken only by the hoarse caw of the crow. It will be peaceful until evening calls them back.

It is months since any rain fell, but with the first shower the lagoon will be deserted. Galahs will not wander more than five miles from water, but, if the clay-pans hold, they will drink nearer to where they feed. But when the hot baking summer comes down, sometimes even midday may see them coming in for water. As night gets nearer, more and more crowd to their favourite resting-places. There they wait, with drooping wings held away from the body, until they have cooled down : then they drop to the margin, or to the stumps which push up from the water's surface. One of these is a

specially coveted post. It is only a little stick, which can hold two easily, but three with difficulty. The odd one is always trying to push his way in, and only succeeds in forcing the whole three on to the wing, to sail round with quarrelsome cries until some way or other the claims of all are satisfied.

The sun goes down. Quickly the pink glow fades out of the sky. Once more sleep covers up the lagoon.

The habits of the birds, as well as of the aborigines, have been altered by the presence of the bore waters. But fish do not seem to thrive so well in them. Until the coming of the white man, hook and line were unknown.

#### NETS AND FISHING

Nets have quite different names, according to what they are made of and the use to which they are put, not only amongst different tribes, but also in the same tribe. At Cowarie, Crooked-foot Peter was my informant. (He owes his nickname to the fact that his leg has been broken and is set with the foot turned out.) He tells me that the fibre string net is called *wooroomarroo*, and is made sometimes broad and sometimes narrow according to the depth of the water, being from two feet up to six feet broad, and from ten yards to thirty yards or more in length, depending upon the breadth of the creek. The rush-made net is called *pinegara*.

First the rushes are collected in bundles. The next step is to scrape them flat with a mussel-shell (*coorie*). Then they are knotted into a mesh, using one big toe to pull against, and measuring the size of the mesh by twisting the rush round the fingers. A knot similar

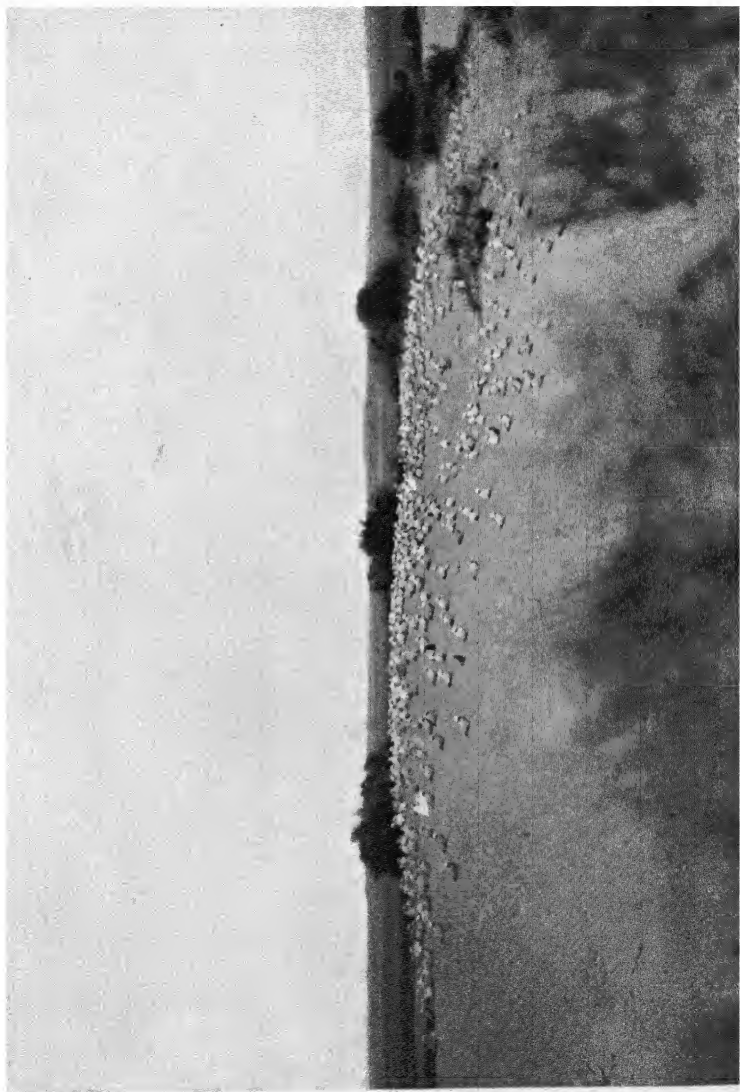


FIG. 46.—THERE THEY WAIT.



to the accompanying figure is used. This proceeds very rapidly, so that in ten minutes the first row is done.

The narrow two-foot-broad net is the one generally used. It is not put into the water until the first flush of the flood has carried away all dead trees or other debris. The net is generally stretched from tree to tree, or from a tree to a stout stake driven into the ground. No floaters or sinkers are employed.

The three-inch mesh that is made by knotting over the four fingers is the one usually employed when fishing for the black bream or *paroo*. This enables the smaller fish to escape. If the *murakara* or perch is the quest, then a larger mesh is employed, and is made by twisting the rush around one or two fingers before encircling them all. The *murakara* is much esteemed by the aborigines, and is a narrow and deep fish called by whites the "yellow belly."

When they want any to eat, a man swims out to the net and helps himself from those caught, which, as they are always plentiful in flood-time, are sure to be numerous. The net is left in the water permanently, and as the rushes of which it is made are very flimsy, it soon rots away and wears out. Fibre string (see p. 67) is much more durable, and when the flood goes down the fibre nets are pulled up and stored in the fork of a tree. At Cowarie, Crooked-foot Peter had a narrow-string fibre net kept in a tree near by, and about four

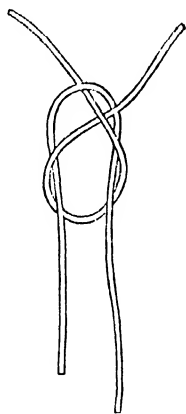


FIG. 47.—Knot used in net-making.

miles off, at Tooperwarinna crossing, another was found near some deserted *poongas* or huts on the banks of the Warburton. With it were stored some stakes on which it could be spread in the river. Similar stakes are to be seen stuck at six-foot intervals in the water near the crossing. At this place the fish are often very abundant, and are diverted towards the nets by stakes stuck in the water close together, which allow the smaller fish to escape between them. The larger ones are driven into a broad short net placed over a four-foot gap in the rows of stakes.

As the water subsides another means is employed. From one bank a shallow pool is walled off in a curve by piles of stones about a foot or eighteen inches high. These have a space about a foot across left in the deepest part where a net can be set. A little further along another scheme is adopted. The main channel of the stream here divides into two, and on each bifurcation a stone barrier is built, which leaves only the current free to afford access to the guarding nets.

#### PITCHERI

At corroboree times, flour for the visitors is a most sought-for article. Usually, however, there is little that cannot be bought with a plug of black tobacco. But even now the chief delight of the aborigine is in *pitcheri*. This is the leaf and stalk of a bush (*Duboisia Hopwoodi*), and when chewed has some narcotic quality. It does not grow near Mungeranie, but far off in Queensland, whither expeditions were sent to obtain it. Now it comes south by barter and is carefully stored for future



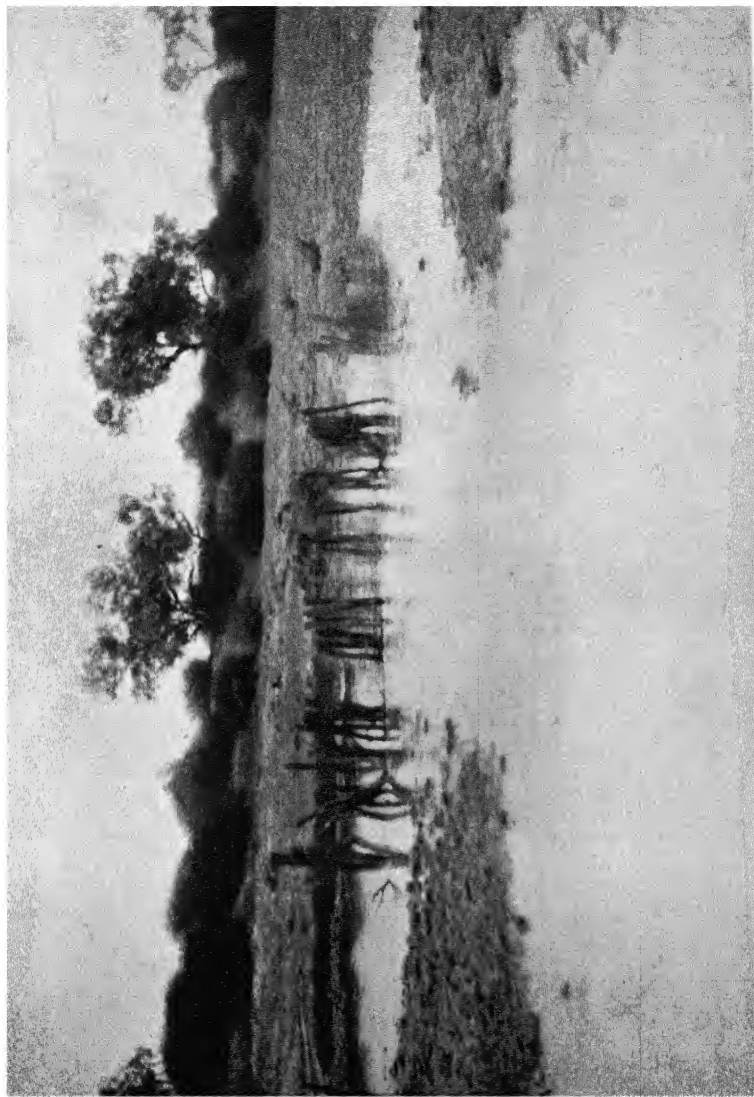


FIG. 48.—STAKES STUCK CLOSE TOGETHER.



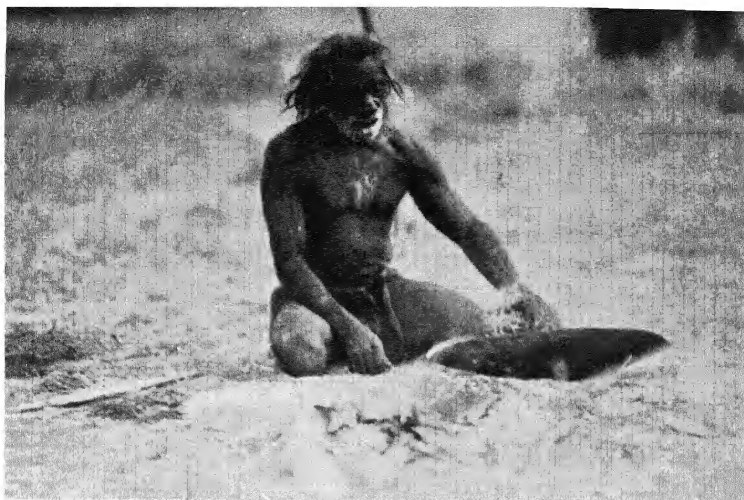


FIG. 49.—*KOONKY BURNING WIRRA.*



FIG. 50.—*FIRE-MAKERS PREPARING.*



use. Often one will pick up near blacks' camps little bundles of twigs tied together that have had all their leaves burnt off. This is the *wirra*, or *Acacia salicina*, which it is customary to mix with the *pitcheri* that has previously been chewed into a sticky mass. This tree grows in places near where a creek has run and is about three or four metres high. The long, narrow leaves are picked on their little twigs. When wanted, a small bundle is tied up and is burnt over a *pirrha* or wooden bowl. The ashes are then mixed with a mass of *pitcheri* that has been chewed. This may be loaned to another or kept for future use. It is stuck behind the ear, or in a dilly-bag, though nowadays the tin match-box makes the commonest receptacle for both the *pitcheri* and the chewed plug.

Although one dose of the *wirra* may not have a great effect, an excess of it produces marked results. The patient becomes drowsy and heavy, but it does not appear to have a long action nor to induce a habit.

### FIRE-MAKING

In the ceremonial of fire-making, five men take part and always lay the scene in a dry clay-pan. Two transverse marks cross these men's chests, and are continued on to their shoulders. They are made, the upper one with fat mixed with ashes, and the lower of burnt gypsum (*kopi*). This is to commemorate the great fire. One man has a fibre string net (*munta*) stuffed with emu feathers, which is worn on his head and is kept in place by the small *charpoo*, or head-band. He is the fire-carrier who carries, stuck in the *munta*, or net, the

fire-stick. The others wear a plume of shredded owls' feathers (*wumpigena*) bound on to bundles of emu feathers, and the whole fastened to a stick, which also is held by the white head-band. Two of the men, the beaters, are there to prevent a spread of the fire. They carry the broad, soft-wood shield—*murrawarroo* it is called, from the white wood of which it is made—and are also armed with green boughs to beat out the flame. All of them have round the waist a *yinka*, or girdle, made of human hair, with which are twisted the green feathers of the shell parrot.<sup>1</sup>

The two actual fire-makers sit opposite each other and hold in their feet on the ground a split stick made from the stalk of Stuart's desert pea.<sup>2</sup> This, not to be confounded with Sturt's desert pea, is a low bush and has a very pithy stem. A notch is cut across it in the centre, and into this notch is inserted a hard-wood stick of mulga. It is about 50 cm. long by 1·5 cm. thick, and has previously been smoothed with a *kalara*, or stone scraper, and also as nearly as possible rounded. The first man twists it rapidly between the palms of his two open hands, bearing downwards all the time upon the softer pea stem. With the pressure his hands gradually sink lower and lower on the stick, but, when they nearly reach the bottom, the second man commences at the top and the first rests. So they alternately proceed until smoke issues from the notch in the pea stem. Then the carrier comes in. His particular work is to feed the spark in the groove with shredded bark or pith until a real flame breaks out.

<sup>1</sup> *Melopsittaca undulata*.

<sup>2</sup> *Crotolaria Cuninghami*.

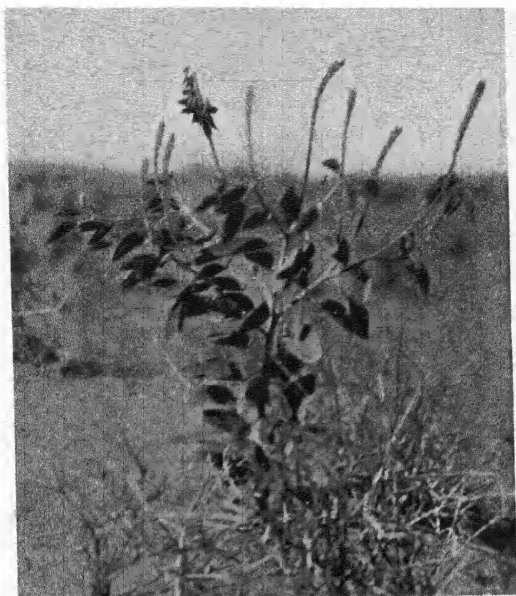


FIG. 51.—STUART'S DESERT PEA (*Crotolaria Cuninghami*).

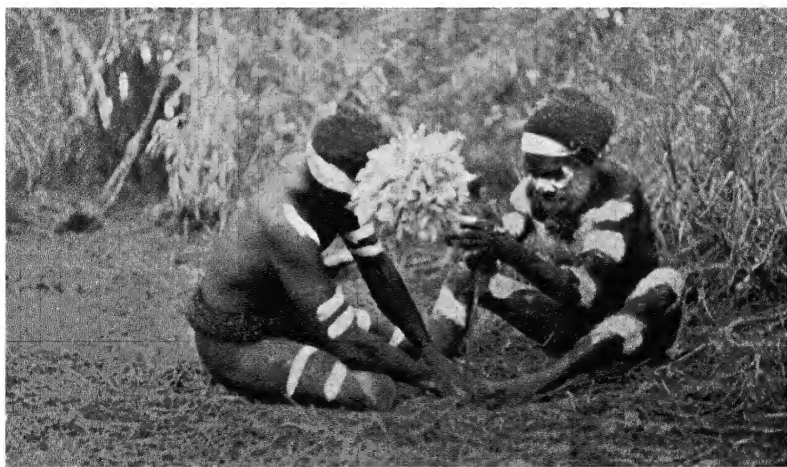


FIG. 52.—FIRE-MAKING





## CHAPTER IV

### IMPLEMENTS OTHER THAN STONE

#### STRING-MAKING

WHILST we were out near the camp I noticed the tracker, Ginwillie, gathering up the dry stalks of the verbena that grew just beyond where the *wadroo* had been dug up. "That *wadnoarie*," he told me as he tucked it into the buggy. The next day he showed me how string is made. A little mound of the dry stalks was spread in front of him. With a *kirra* or boomerang he beat the *wadnoarie*, much in the manner of a man beating carpets, until all the hard outside shell of the stalk was smashed up. Then it was winnowed through his hands until finally nothing but fibre remained. This fibre was teased out with the fingers. The next process was the string-making. A small quantity of fibre was rolled with the palm of his hand on his left thigh, constantly pushing his hand away from him. As this was made into a cord another lot of fibre was joined up. He next took two cross-pieces of wood each about 20 cm. long, which were stuck crossways on a sharpened stick about 50 cm. long. This was taken in the right hand and had attached to it the commencing fibre string. Every now and then the wooden cross was rotated by rolling it with outspread palm on the right thigh, winding on more and more string. When a fresh lot of fibre is to be joined

on and rolled, the cross is stuck into the ground and the addition is rolled in with the fingers. Sometimes a hook is used, made by cutting off a curved stick just below where a little branch is given off. The curved stick is cut off long and the other end is sharpened so as to stick it in the ground when not in use. Fur or human hair, which sometimes has green shell parrot feathers worked in, is often twisted up instead of the fibre.

For the *yinka*, or belt worn by initiated men, as much as 250 metres of hair string may be used.<sup>1</sup> Fibre string is employed in making fishing nets (*wooroomarroo*), and also the net (*munta*) which, stuffed with emu feathers, is worn on the head.

Similarly a closely meshed net is made that is plastered thick with *kopi*, or gypsum, and is worn round the forehead in ceremonies. It is called *charpoo*. In working at nets or similar articles a bodkin is used. This is made of the quill of a feather on to which the string is twisted or is stuck with *mindrie*.

The cross-belts used in some corroborees are formed by winding the fibre string into a skein about 60 cm. long, which is tied at each end with fibre, fur or hair string.

A thick belt which is slipped up over the hips is made by obtaining first a firm core of fibre. Round this is wrapped the hair string which has the green feathers of the shell parrot (*Melopsittaca undulata*) woven into its substance.

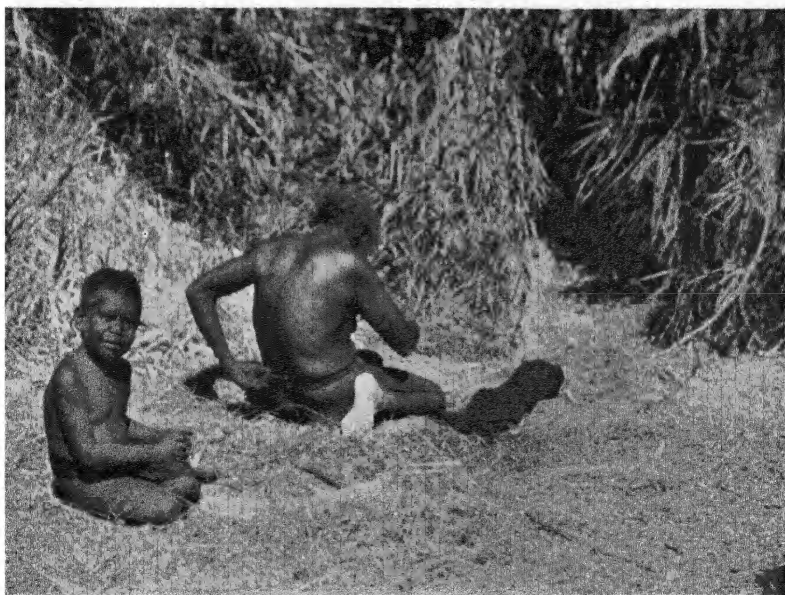
A smaller belt than the *yinka* is made of fur or fibre

<sup>1</sup> The hair-string girdle in the possession of Dr. R. Pulleine of Adelaide is 325 yards long. He says that it came from Nappamerrie on Cooper's Creek, and is complete without a break.



FIG. 53.—PREPARING TO MAKE FIBRE STRING FROM *WADNOARIE*.

... to the camp. On their





string twisted several times round the waist. It is called *dampera*, and the strings hanging down in front are known as *wilpoo*.

### WOODEN WEAPONS

It is quite easy, says Mr. Aiston, to trace the development of the boomerang (*kirra*) by the weapons still in use, from the simple throwing-stick up to the finished thin-edged *kirra*. The original stick, just a piece of wood usually about two feet long by one inch in diameter, is cut from any convenient tree and used to throw at any animals that the hunter may come across. A party of blacks sitting down at a place where game is plentiful will cut a lot of these sticks (about six apiece) and will go out for an afternoon's sport. Any game that they get they will, of course, bring back to the camp. On their return the sticks, those that have not been lost, are thrown away. They are then absolutely discarded. If by chance the same party go out on the following day a new lot of sticks are cut. The old ones may be gathered up and used for firewood, but are not put to any other use. These sticks are roughly shaped as in Fig. 57.

Next is found the knobby-ended club made from a tree root. A root having a bulbous end is selected and the tree carefully cut down. The club has a handle about twenty inches long with a head from three to four inches in diameter. The handle is roughly pointed, but it is never very sharp. This weapon is used in fighting as a club, and is sometimes thrown end over end, the aim being to make the end of the handle strike the body

of the opponent, when the weight of the root will drive it in, but they are usually kept in the belt to be used in close fighting. They are not favoured for hunting, as they are clumsy and awkward to carry. Fig. 58 shows their shape.

Then comes the cigar-shaped club called *wirrie*, illustrated in Fig. 59. This has a bulbous swelling for about a third of its length on one end, and both ends are comparatively sharp-pointed. The handle or throwing-end tapers away to a fine point and the end that has the bulge runs to a rather blunt point. These clubs are used for both hunting and fighting. When thrown they are made to strike the ground and ricochet upwards, the handle-end striking. They will stick into a man's body when thrown at fifty yards and are dangerous up to about a hundred yards. They are also used for hunting large game such as kangaroo or emu. They are not in general use, their employment being more an exception than otherwise. I do not think myself that they were ever generally adopted, but were only used by those tribesmen who wanted to show off. In close fighting they were employed in the same way as a bayonet, the fighter endeavouring to penetrate the stomach of his opponent with the sharp end.

The next step is to put a curve in this and shift the bulge to near the centre. This gives a *koondi*-shaped weapon with a bulge in the centre. This was found to make a better throwing weapon; for some reason a curved weapon travels better than a straight one. This improvement was called a *koondi wirrie*, and it was used



FIG. 57.—ROUGH THROWING-STICK.



FIG. 58.—KNOB-ENDED THROWING-STICK.



FIG. 59.—WIRRIE.



FIG. 60.—KOONDI WIRRIE.



FIG. 61.—DOUBLE-BULGED WIRRIE.



FIG. 62.—KOONDI.



FIG. 63.—KIRRA UMYARRA.



FIG. 64.—KIRRA WITH POINTED ENDS.





for all purposes for which the ordinary *wirrie* was used, but was more relied upon as a throwing weapon. It was shaped as is shown in Fig. 60.

Another development would seem to be along a side track, and was a weapon with two bulges and a comparatively thin place between the two. This weapon was a combination of throwing-stick, a stabbing-stick and a quarterstaff. When thrown it was made to ricochet like the ordinary *wirrie*, and when used as a stabbing-stick or quarterstaff was grasped in the middle between the two bulges with both hands. It was usually about three feet long and about two inches in diameter at the bulges, and was never common as a weapon, for it was not of much use in hunting. It could be used as a bayonet, both forehanded and backhanded, and the bulges made it a formidable club. It could smash down the guard of a shield or a *kirra* with its weight. It was always made of heavy, tough wood, usually needlewood or dead-finish. Fig. 61 gives a rough sketch of the shape.

The next step is the *koondi* proper, depicted in Fig. 62. This is really a boomerang, which instead of being flat in cross section is nearly round. It was made in lengths from about two feet six inches up to about three feet six. In use it was either a throwing-stick or a club. In a big fight it was thrown when the opposing parties were about thirty yards apart, and was considered a bone-breaker, the object aimed at being to strike the limbs of an opponent. It was only used as a club to a very limited extent. For some reason it appears to have been more

used by the Dieri tribe than any other in this district, possibly because the Dieri lived in timbered country along Cooper's Creek, and the lighter boomerangs would break up on the trees.

The *koondi* gradually got longer and flatter until it was no good for throwing, so was developed into a big curved weapon that is used like a two-handed sword. This was anything up to six feet in length and from three to four inches broad. They ranged, in cross section, from perfectly round to a flattened oval. In use they were only for fighting, as their size made them too awkward for hunting. They were carried in the belt at the back of the body with the end sticking up over the head of their owner. In a fight, after all of the man's throwing weapons had been discharged, he would grasp the *murrawirrie* with both hands over his head, and holding it with hands about a foot apart at one end, with the curve downwards, he would use it as a sword, trying to use about only a foot of the end. The result would be that the motion of hitting with it was a drawing stroke when aimed at the chest. The wound usually inflicted penetrates into the pleural cavity, if it does not go right through the body. An old fellow, Mundowdna Jack, or Murrapitcheroo, told me how he fought two men armed with boomerangs and *koondis*. He used only a *murrawirrie*. The end of the fight was that he was not touched, one of the others had his skull split, and the other was wounded through the chest wall. Both died at once. Until a few years ago the two skeletons were visible near Kalamurina on the Warburton river. The *murrawirrie* was the favourite war weapon of the big

man, as it needed a lot of strength to wield it properly. The women sometimes used it, possibly because it was frequently left at home as being too bulky to carry. I once met a party of blacks travelling, and all of the *murrawirries* were being carried by the women. I teased them about it, and one of the younger blacks playfully threatened one of the girls, a big powerful woman, with his spear. She at once fell into a guarding position and dared him to throw the spear. He threw it and the girl turned it aside with the *murrawirrie* and chased the man. He ran away laughing. She appeared to be perfectly capable of handling the weapon.

Now, returning to the *koondi*, we find that there were a lot of attempts, as shown by the different types still in use, to evolve a perfect throwing weapon. I think it would be safe to include the *kulchera*, or, as it is more commonly known, the *wit-wit*, which I have described elsewhere. This, although primarily a plaything, was at times used as a weapon. Its shape leads one to suppose that it was an adaption of the *wirrie*, made lighter to get a greater range when thrown. Experiment along this line not being quite successful, it was tried to improve the *koondi* by flattening its side until it was oval in cross section instead of being round. Other experiments were tried until at last the right thing was struck and the *kirra* was discovered. The ordinary shape of a *kirra* (boomerang) is too well known to need description, but it is to be noted that the boomerangs seen are mostly rounded on both sides. Those that were quite flat on one side were sometimes traded from the north. This is the popular shape; any variations, such as the

*kirra umyarra* (literally boomerang with a hook), were never in such general use among the tribes here as the ordinary *kirra* was. They also were traded down along the Queensland route.

The *kirra umyarra* (Fig. 63), besides having a hook at the end, had a notch in the crotch formed by the hook and the main part of the weapon.

The aim with this was that the hook part would catch on the guard weapon of the opponent and the free end would swing round on to the man. The notch was for the purpose of preventing the guard from gliding into the hook, and also to make it jump on to the beak, when the swing round would develop. In practice, these weapons were not very effective. The fact that it was impossible to get a piece of wood with a grain that would curve to form the hook, made the junction of the hook and the main part of the weapon the weak spot, and it usually broke off at this place when thrown. When used as a hand weapon it was more powerful, as the hook part was then being used as a pick. It would have been a very good weapon if the hook could have been strengthened in any way, but with the Wonkonguru it was never in very general use. There are several slight variations; one man that I know always cuts the ends of his *kirras* to leave a point, like a nail sticking out. This was done by the Yaurorka men. He argues that this will make a bad cut if it only brushes the object thrown at. Another will sharpen the ends until the edge is knife-like (Fig. 64), with the same object in view, but these are all variations and cannot be described as different types.

The ordinary *kirra* is such a universal tool and weapon

combined that it is hard to think of any use to which a native would not put it. It was used as a poker and shovel when cooking, the ashes being scraped away to make a place in which to put the food that was being cooked, and the ashes were again raked back with the *kirra*. The food was raked out of the ashes with the *kirra*. It was employed to poke up the fire and to break up any half-burnt logs exactly as a poker would be used by a white man. It was used as a digging tool, and as a club with which to kill the game after it was dug out. When travelling they would disembowel with it any game that was caught to make it lighter to carry. In this case the animal was laid on its back, the *kirra* was jabbed into it to open the abdomen, and the intestines were taken out. The cavity was then pinned together with thorns or small sticks "to keep the blood in," so the blacks say. They do not like anything that has been either skinned or disembowelled before cooking, and try to avoid doing it at any time; but when they are forced to disembowel their kills, they always carefully close up the opening again. They say that the meat is too dry if they do not do this.

*Kirras* used for these purposes are not carefully finished. They are usually only roughly chopped out, no care at all being taken in their making. It is not worth while, as in a very short time the ends are burnt and charred until by and by they are too short to be of use and they are thrown away. Their end usually is that they are thrown at a dog, and their owner does not trouble to pick them up again. As the blacks always respect the property of their fellow-tribesmen, the others leave

them. It is always possible to pick up these half-burnt *kirras* near a camp.

Fighting boomerangs are a very different matter. These are usually got by barter from other tribes. For some reason a native does not repose much trust in a weapon that he has made himself. When bartering, he places value on the shape, weight (a light, thin-edged *kirra* is considered of more value than a thick-edged one), the amount and quality of the decoration, and the tradition (if any) that belongs to the *kirra*. Their *kirras* have traditions that call to memory the swords in an old Norse saga. A *kirra* that I have was one of a pair. These had each killed a man in the north-west, somewhere out from the Finke River. They were brought into this country by a middle-aged Urabunna man, who had got them from his father; the tradition that accompanied them was that they were magical as long as they were together, and their owner, for the time, was perfectly safe. He could neither be killed nor wounded. But if by any chance they were separated, the one remaining in the possession of the owner would turn on him and fail him in some critical moment. This Urabunna man had the misfortune to break one in a play fight. He then had to get rid of the other, either by destroying it or losing it. If he gave it to another man, the bad luck would follow with the *kirra*, so he gave it to me. It is one of the most beautifully decorated weapons that I have seen. I would have liked to have got the other, even though it was broken, but the man told me that he had burnt it. Another weapon that I have that has a tradition is a *murrawirrie*. I found this stuck down a

rabbit burrow between Kalladeina and Cooper's Creek. Thinking it a queer place to find it I brought it along. I had a boy with me at the time. This boy advised me to leave it, as he knew it and it was very bad poison. I was curious, but he would not tell me any more. On my return I showed it to some of the old blacks and it was immediately recognised. It was very old and had been at Kopperamanna for very many years. When the oldest man there was a boy it was old. Bad luck would attend anyone who fought with it, as he always got hurt. If a man who did not know its strength wielded it, he would only get hurt a little bit, but if it was used by anyone that knew its history and used it in bravado, the man would be killed in the fight. It must not be destroyed, but could be lost. It had been lost scores of times, but it was always turning up again, being usually brought in by some boy who did not know its history. The old men were very pleased that I had it, as they reckoned it was now safe.

This digression has taken me away from the *kirra* as a fighting weapon. In a fight where all the tribe was assembled the fighting men carried all their boomerangs in the hair belt around the waist; they would sometimes carry as many as a dozen each, six on each side. One would be carried in the hand, and the *murrawirrie* was stuck into the waistband at the back. When the opposing forces were about 150 yards apart the first *kirras* would be thrown. At this distance a good weapon would inflict a disabling wound; the two ranks gradually approached one another, throwing *kirras* and *wirries* until they met; they then drew the *murrawirrie* or

other hand weapon with which they had armed themselves, and went at it until one side or the other gave way. These battles were comparatively harmless so far as the number of killed was concerned. Only an odd one or two was the usual thing, but the *kirras* made some fearful wounds. Mr. A. J. Scobie, who saw a fight at Berlino thirty years ago, says that the wounded, if unable to walk, were carried away and attended by the women until they got well. If it was impossible to get them away they were left where they fell. The other side never troubled about wounded enemies; they would possibly laugh at the contortions caused by their agony, but otherwise would be indifferent to them.

The force with which a *kirra* travels was illustrated to me once by a blackboy with whom I was travelling. He threw one at a wild turkey that was about fifty yards from him; the *kirra* struck the branch of a tree about twenty-five yards away. This branch was about two inches in diameter. The *kirra* cut the branch clean off. Different trees were selected for different purposes by the Wonkonguru. Of these mulga was the most used, for from it were made *kirra*, *murrawirrie*, *wadna* and *wirrie*. From an angle on a coolibah or box tree was cut the *pirrha*, whilst the dead-finish acacia was always employed in fashioning the *koondi*.

Another legend connected with the *kirra* was the naming of two water-holes in the Wonkonguru country; the moora made a *kirra* at a water-hole, and after it was finished he threw it for a test. It fell at a place twenty-five miles away and broke. When the moora saw this he called the place where he made the *kirra*, *Kudna-kirra*



(rotten boomerang), and the place where the *kirra* fell he called *Kirra-wadna* (broken boomerang).

The spear does not seem to have been a very popular weapon with these tribes. They had the long, pole-like spear called *piranburra*, made out of a box-tree root or mulga root, and employed it as much for digging as for any other purpose. It was occasionally used for fighting, but mostly for ceremonial combats, such as fights between two persons only. This spear was from about six feet long with the Yaurorka, up to ten feet long with the Dieri and Wonkonguru. It was not effective as a throwing weapon at more than about twenty yards and was mostly used as a lance. It was very useful when digging out wild dogs for food, one man digging while the other waited with poised *piranburra* until the dog's head was uncovered. He would then drive in the spear before the dog could bite. The woman's digging-stick, *wadna*, is in my opinion only developed from a broken *piranburra*. The name *wadna* signifies broken, and it seems to me that it was found that the shorter weapon was handier. They were made exactly alike; both had one sharp round point and one flat, chisel-shaped point. Spears thrown with a *womera* were not generally used, being introduced by the Arunta.

Another spear is the *kutchie*; this is made out of any light wood, lignum or even the stems of the giant marsh-mallow that grows in the Diamantina swamps. These shafts, after being straightened and trimmed, have a piece of hard wood, mulga usually, which is flattened and sharpened to a point, fastened to the shaft with emu sinews. Sometimes a prong of some hard wood is bound

on about three inches from the point to make a barb. The butt of the shaft then has a round piece of hard wood fastened on to it to carry the hollow in which the tooth of the throwing-stick is inserted. It is also fastened on with sinews. The soft wood of the shaft would tear out if the hard tooth of the stick was applied directly to it.

The *munkerara* (throwing-stick) was usually made of coolibah wood, a piece of hard wood being tied on to the one end, and a stone *tuhla* fixed to the handle end with *mindrie* or *pooya* pitch, as the triodia gum, which is bartered from the north, is called. The stone was for sharpening the point of the spear. These spears were sometimes used in fighting, but their main use was in the spearing of big game, kangaroos particularly. The spear if thrown and stuck into a kangaroo stopped him from travelling, so that the hunter could come up and finish him with the *kirra*. The barb on the end prevented the spear from falling out if it once entered. These spears were effective up to about one hundred and fifty yards.

The shields used were usually obtained by barter from the northern tribes. They were called *murrawarwo* (literally hand-white) and were always made of soft wood. There is no suitable wood in this country, but I have seen an occasional one made from a tree that we call whitewood, which is a very soft, spongy wood, but it has a tendency to split if allowed to dry. The ideal wood is that of the bean tree,<sup>1</sup> and big exchange was bartered for these. Some of them must have come hundreds of miles to reach this country, as I cannot

<sup>1</sup> *Erythrina vespertilio*.

hear of any bean trees within five hundred miles of here. The shields are oval-shaped with the handle flush with the back, a hollow being cut from under the handle to allow of the insertion of the fingers. A soft wood was always preferred, as one made of hard wood would cause the weapon opposing it to glance, but the soft pithy wood would deaden the flight of the weapon. In use the holder always endeavoured to divert a spear, but aimed to stop a *kirra*. A *kirra* in full flight would occasionally split a shield, but it would deaden its own pace by so doing. Before a ceremonial fight the shields are painted with various designs, but I do not think they have any significance. I think they are only for decorative purposes, as possibly the fresh scars will show up. The man showing most marks on his shield after a fight is very popular with the women.

The decorations are painted on with red and yellow ochre, with sometimes a cross band of red ochre and blood, which is obtained by opening a vein in the arm and allowing the blood to drip into a *pirrha* with a little red ochre in it. The ochre and blood are mixed into a thin paste and painted on to the shield with a bunch of feathers.

Ochre is very plentiful in the Wonkonguru country. At what is now known as Mungeranie Gap there are outcrops of ochre that seem to have bubbled out of the earth at some time. It is dry and powdery, but gives the impression of having been blown up from below. This was the greatest asset of the Wonkonguru tribe when bartering. The meeting-place for the northern tribes was at Birdsville and at Goyder's Lagoon, and

there the Wonkonguru would trade their ochre for shields and *pitcheri*.

In all my travelling among the blacks I have not seen the return boomerang used. I have had several made especially for me, and have got the blacks to throw these. In every case the experience was the same. He would wait until there was a strong wind, when he would throw the boomerang flat against the wind about five feet from the ground. The wind would then catch it and take it up in a spiral curve, until it overcame the forward impulse given by the thrower and the boomerang would come back to within ten yards of his feet. Usually the boomerang broke after one or two throws, but they obviously had no idea of making a boomerang that would return, as do those of the Eastern tribes and the Western Australians. The comeback—so called—was lighter than the ordinary *kirra*. Its return is due to a tilt-up at one or both ends, and was not known to the Central blacks.

An ordinary *kirra* will generally take a curving course when thrown by an expert. The thrower will note the direction and strength of the wind and will allow for this in his throw. He may even get as much as twenty yards from the straight by throwing across and slightly up wind. Of course height will be allowed for the *kirra* to drop down on to the mark, but usually it is thrown almost straight at the target. It must always be remembered that the peculiar intelligence of the blackfellow deprives him of the capacity of estimating anything complicated, and also prevents initiative in throwing. He throws a weapon as his father has taught him, and is

afraid to initiate an improvement for fear that he may be deemed *kootchi* (uncanny). He will develop wonderful skill in the use of things that were used by his father and his father's father, but never attempts to get out of the groove. If they get white men's tools they use them as nearly as possible in the same way as they used their stone tools. And this applies to the use of weapons. It is a pretty sight to see a mob of young blacks coming in from a hunting trip. When about twenty yards from the camp they make their *kirras* "walk in," *i. e.* they throw them so that they will turn end over end apparently as if walking. Each tries to just give enough force to make his *kirra* walk to the opening of his *poonga* ; the one falling nearest being deemed the best throw.

#### MURRAPITCHEROO

Beyond Cowarie lies the *mickrie* country. It is so called because there *mickrie* or soaks are the only means of obtaining water. Crooked-foot Peter, who was our guide, pointed out where it commenced, beyond the limits of the Warburton's overflow. The old station of Kalamurina lies at the edge of the watered land far down the creek, but it has long since been deserted, having lasted only two seasons when the floods were up.

Before the station was formed there stood there the half-dozen *poongas* of an outlying cluster of the Wonkon-guru. Young Murrapitcheroo, a boy of eighteen, had gone out at daybreak to see what fish had been caught in his net higher up, where the stakes had been driven into the falling stream of the Warburton. He had strung

his fish on a rush, had drunk deep and was nearing the camp on his return, when he saw that no men of his own tribe were there, and a score of the Ngameni blacks were even now getting ready to carry off the women who still remained. Murrapitcheroo dropped his burden and turned. A cry from one of the captives told him that he had been seen, so with one *kirra* and the long *murrawirrie*, or two-handed sword, he dashed off. Three of the enemy pressed fast on his trail. One of these, however, had already received a wound in the thigh, and it was only two that still pursued him as he dodged, always keeping a tree on his right, for from that side would the *kirra* in its flight bend in as they followed him. A *wirrie* from the left hit the ground just behind him and ricocheted up, just grazing his shoulder.

The *wirrie* flies straight, unlike the *kirra*, and against it trees were no guard. Turning, he saw that his opponents had separated. One was going up through the trees and would soon drive him out, for the course of the creek here bends sharply to the left. The other was coming straight on. Quickly his mind was made up. To keep on was to be driven into the open gibbers, where sooner or later he would be caught. The man coming straight on was faster than he and must certainly be disposed of. He raced towards him, throwing his *kirra* and guarding himself against the enemies' missiles with the *murrawirrie*. Then they met. He swerved from the *wirrie* as it glanced off the ground, he dodged the *kirra* and struck hard at his opponent's right side. Almost the heavy-ended *wirrie* warded off the stroke. It did but

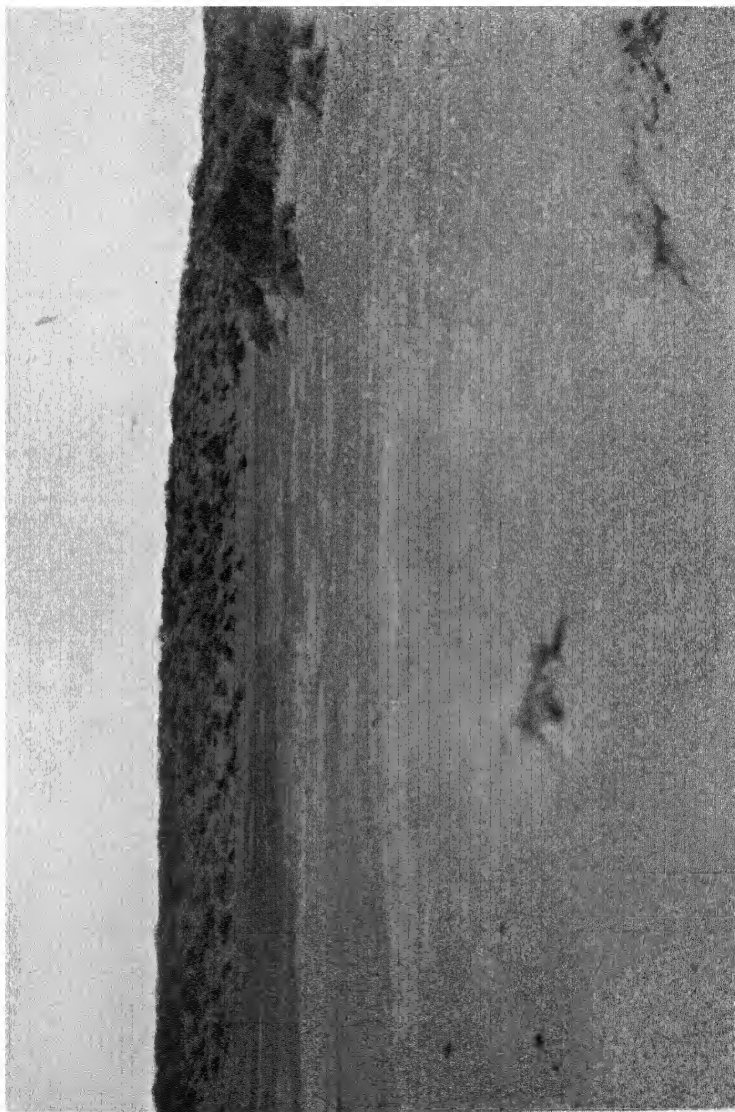


FIG. 65.—SAND RIDGE AT APAWANDINNA.





deflect it a little, however, and the man fell with his head smashed in.

Murrapitcheroo turned to meet his second opponent, now close upon him. Again the *murrawirrie* descended, and this time the aim was sure, for it crashed into his enemy's chest. Then he ran out of the trees and between the two sand-hills that for miles and miles trend north and south. On and on he went at a steady jog until thirty miles away he reached the Apawandinna water-hole.

We next find him down at Hergott's, one hundred and fifty miles south-west, where he was tracker for the police. But soon he drifted still further to the Mundowdna Station. Now he has returned to the country of the Wonkonguru; he is an old man, and told me this story whilst we waited for the men of the corroboree to paint themselves. It may or may not be exactly true, but two skeletons were, until a few years ago, to be found near Kalamurina, one with his head smashed in and the other with ribs shattered where the *murrawirrie* did its work.

### FUR STRING

It is strange, but the latest treatment by the German Doctor Bier has its exact counterpart in our aborigines' surgical method. It is carried out amongst them with a piece of fur string. This is bound firmly round the inflamed or painful part and then tied off. First, however, if you are a blackfellow, you will get your string "sung," that is, you or the local *koonki*<sup>1</sup> will chant over it, exhorting it to cure.

<sup>1</sup> Doctor or magician.

I have tried using the rubber bandage, but have never used fur string that has been sung.

Poor old Tommy Tommy had rheumatic pains everywhere, and everywhere a piece of fur string was tied on. Mr. Crombie<sup>1</sup> was looking out from the top of a sand-hill, when he saw in the distance something moving about. There was a man missing, but it was too far off to tell if this one was white, black or yellow, so he sent Allan his son to gallop over with some water. When he got there he found it was Tommy Tommy, clad only in an empty pannikin and scraps of fur string. Round wrists, arms, forehead, ankles, thighs, everywhere the little tie of twisted fur obtruded itself. He held out the pannikin, but could only croak, "Me gib it water, bloody leg too sore." Then he died.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. J. Crombie has lived at Mungeranie for over thirty years.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME STONE IMPLEMENTS

IN describing the stone tools that are used by the Wonkonguru it would be difficult to leave out stones that were not used for some purpose. I propose to describe first what I may call ideal stones, and after I will deal with what may be called casual tools.

When chipping from the parent stone or core, all flakes that are of a useful shape are saved for subsequent working up.

All long flakes with a sharp, cutting edge are kept for knives (*yutchawunta*) ; the edge is not touched, but the blunt end may be chipped to take the *mindrie* pitch with which it is handled.

The larger knives are used for fighting, and for cutting up large animals after they are cooked, and for the final smoothing of wooden weapons. Any with a curved or hooked end and a keeled back are kept exclusively for fighting (*illyawunta*). The curve adds to their value, as when fighting the only stroke that is allowed is a tearing cut upwards (from the inside of the leg). The curve makes the knife bite in. Another use to which the large knife is put is in cutting out the handle of a shield (*murrawaroo*). This is done by cutting across the grain for about two inches from the side of the handle and then along the grain to the other end of the handle,

in very much the same way as a white man cuts out a mortise in a piece of wood. As the wood is green when worked this is an easier job than would seem at first sight.

The next tool in importance is the circumcision or surgical knife, also called *yutchawunta*; this is a leaf-shaped knife that varies in size from about two inches from point to heel and one and a half inches wide, to as small as one inch long by three-quarters of an inch wide.

This is used exclusively for surgical work, circumcision, subincision, for the making of the marks on the chest and back, or for opening veins. Great care is taken in the selection of these knives; they must have a keen edge, not necessarily for the better performance of the operation, but for the pride of possession. The one who has the best-shaped knife has the privilege of crowing over the other performers in the ceremony. It must also have a thumb or a finger grip flaked on it so that it will not slip. It is held between the thumb and forefinger in use.

The smaller knife, also called *yutchawunta*, is a thin flake from about four inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide to some as small as two inches long and little more than a quarter of an inch wide. These are used for any light cutting, as for skinning small animals to make water-bags. When used as fighting knives for the boys, they are held between the fingers; sometimes two or three at a time, in the one hand. They are also made for toys for the children. This knife could be called the pocket-knife of the blacks.

Next in importance is the broad chisel called *tuhla* ; these are usually about one and a half inches broad and about one and a half inches in length. Three used *tuhlas* in my possession are in breadth three inches, two and seven-eighths inches, and two and three-quarter inches respectively. There is also a complete one about four inches across. The edge is chipped by striking with a *coolkee* (*koolkie* or *kulki*, a hammer stone) until it is semi-circular, with a keen cutting edge all round the semi-circle. It is always chipped from the one side, so that viewed from the one side it presents a clean edge, but on the other it shows the crenulations caused by the chipping. This is mounted on a curved piece of boomerang-shaped wood with *mindrie* pitch and is used as a chopping tool. When the edge is blunted it is sharpened up again by chipping. This sharpening is continued until the stone from having a convex edge becomes concave. It is then thrown away and another stone is selected. These worn-out *tuhlas* are all very much the same in appearance and have been thought by some whites to have been another tool; but a very little thought will enable anyone to realise that all being chipped in the same manner after fixing on the piece of wood (*koondi*), they would all chip about the same and would all be discarded when they had passed the useful stage.

Worn-out *tuhlas* picked up in districts where stones are scarce show a lot more signs of wear than those found where stone is plentiful.

These stones are usually bedded well down in the *mindrie*, as they have to stand the jar of the chopping stroke with which they are used.

The next stone is the *kalara*. This is used as a scraper and its appearance varies a lot. Some are very like small *tuhlas*, having a chipped edge, others are only square-ended flakes; they are not bedded so deeply in the *mindrie*, as they are used more as a gouge; often they are not embedded at all, but are used in the hand. The edge is kept to the work and forced along, so that a groove is made, along the weapon which is being fashioned, from end to end.

Some workmen are very clever in the use of these. I have some weapons and utensils in my possession that show a clean groove quite forty inches long without a single break. *Kalaras* were mostly used in the making of *pirrhas* (woman's digging-bowl), and these always show the *kalara* marks. But they were also used in shaping up any wooden weapon after it had been roughed out with the *tuhla*.

The last stone of the ideal type to be described is the *pirrie*; this is a small, pear-shaped tool running to a fine point. It is used as a graving tool to make decorative marks on wooden weapons, and occasionally it is used as a drill for light boring work, such as making the hole to take the string of an *inchitcha* (bull-roarer). It was not heated when used as a boring tool, for the heat would melt the pitch with which it was fastened to the *koondi* and it would fall off. The art of making these seems to be lost among the tribes here, though one old man showed me how they were made by pressure. I have found hundreds that were beautifully chipped—one that I have is three inches long by three-eighths of an inch wide—but those used by the blacks to-day are simply any



FIG. 66.—USING A *KOONDI TUHLA*.

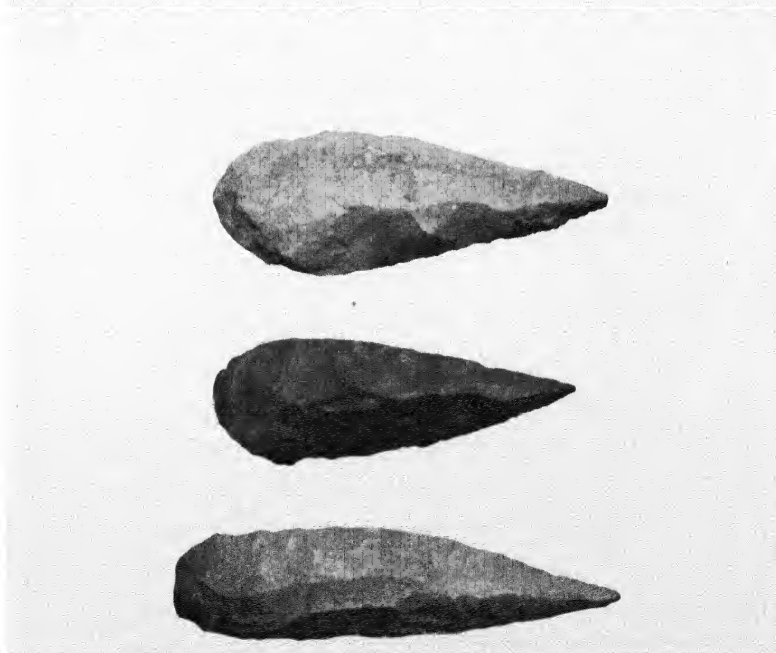


FIG. 67.—*PIKKIE*.





sharp-pointed stone. They are chipped up from a stone that has been flaked roughly to the shape with a *koolkie*, in the same manner as a *tuhla*, but the final chipping is not done until they are mounted on a *koondi*. Sometimes, to put an extra fine point on them, the workman bites off a chip with his teeth. I have seen this done several times. I noticed the other day an old fellow trying to get off a small flake that spoilt a *pirrie* he was mounting—he put it in his mouth and bit off the piece.

This completes the list of what I have called ideal tools. They call them all by the one name, *tuhla*. In speaking of them they will say *koondi tuhla*, *koondi tuhla kalara*, and *koondi tuhla pirrie*.

Casual stones are any that have a sharp edge. They are used for scraping. Directly they are blunt they are thrown away and another picked up. Sometimes they are chipped if the stone will keep its edge long enough to warrant chipping, but usually they are not kept. In finally smoothing a boomerang the workman would use twenty or thirty of these scrapers. They are called *pundunya* (literally scraper), which means any sharp-edged stone. They are not mounted in any way.

Another stone used in smoothing is the top grinder of a *munyaeroo* mill (called *muddathirrie*) or any piece of flat sandstone. This is used as a rasp for smoothing off the rough marks of the *kalara*, and to rasp down any knots.

In describing these tools it must always be remembered that the casual nature of the black does not allow him to keep any tool for the one purpose. He is just as likely

to use his best stone knife to scrape a weapon as he is to use any flake that he may pick up. At the same time he may get an affection for a certain tool and only keep it for the purpose for which it is most suitable. For example, it often happens that a blackfellow will work for a month to get a white man's razor. He will shave himself, usually without soap, and as many friends as he can persuade to let him operate upon them; and then will try the razor on a piece of wood, with the result that the face of the razor is broken out. He will then light-heartedly throw it away. This casualness is what makes it so hard to say specifically that a tool is used for any one purpose, but in describing them I have carefully watched and asked until I could arrive at what was aimed at in each particular tool, and so have classed them.

Small tools are also made for the children, who are usually interested watchers of the work of the old men. I think that very often the old men make the small tools to keep the youngsters from breaking the larger working tools. The toy tools are made from any flake that happens to be handy and are roughly mounted on a stick.

I was interested in a discussion between a young Arunta man and two old Wonkonguru as to the difference in the tools used by the two tribes, so I got the Arunta man to make a set of tools as used by his tribe. He picked out a couple of big flakes and in a few minutes he had made a hand-axe and a big draw-knife. These were gigantic to any that the Wonkonguru used. One was five inches long by three inches wide and was shaped like a billhook. The other was four inches by two and a half inches, shaped very like the Wonkonguru *tuhla*,

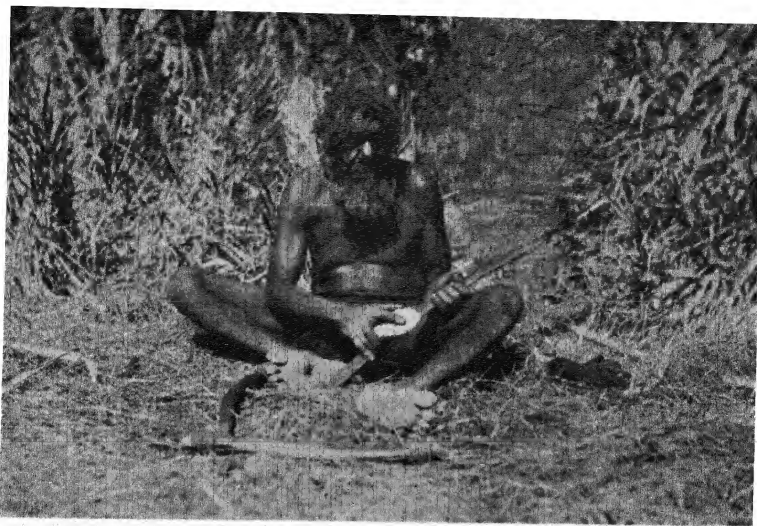


FIG. 68.—*MUDDATHIRRIE* OR UPPER GRINDING-STONE—USED IN SMOOTHING.

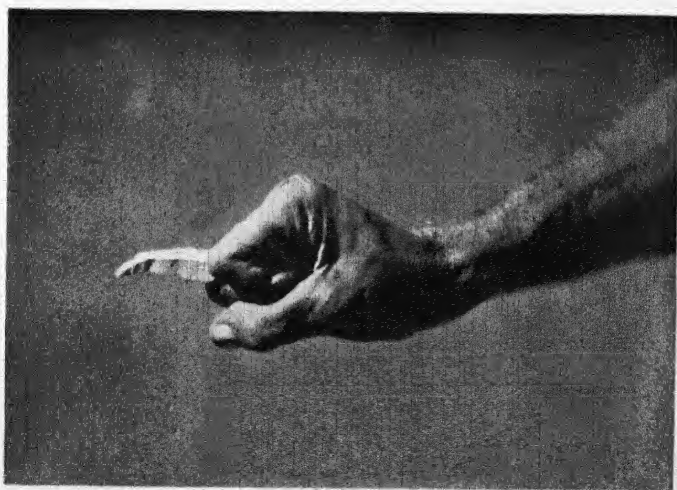


FIG. 69.—METHOD OF HOLDING *YUTCHAIWUNTA*  
(boy's fighting knife).



roughly oval-shaped and chipped around the hand-grip. These tools are held in the hand, not mounted on a *koondi*, and are used with a chopping, drawing motion. The billhook-shaped tools took off shavings nearly an inch wide and half an inch thick. The *tuhla*-shaped tool is held in the fingers with the cutting edge out from the palm near the heel of the hand, the chipped edge to the palm of the hand. It is used with a drawing motion very like a spokeshave. The workman explained that the hook was to keep the tool to the work; he showed how a straight edge would run in and would not make a clean cut. He was rather proud to be able to show off before the old Wonkonguru men, and so went to a lot of trouble. The weapon to be worked up was fixed in the sand rigidly, and the tool gripped in both hands was brought down with a chopping motion until the weapon was roughly shaped. Small things, like a boomerang, were roughly made with the billhook-shaped tool. They were then smoothed with the *tuhla*-shaped tool, and finally rubbed down with a straight-edge scraper held in the fingers. This scraper was called *nunyenarrie*. For making round weapons, spears, waddies, or *koondis*, a different set of tools was used. The stick to be worked down was first chopped with a triangular-shaped tool with a chipped edge in the middle; this was held in the fingers with an overhand grip. The wood was held with one end on the ground against the foot to steady it, the other end being in the left hand. The tool was then used with a chopping motion, downwards. It cuts the wood down very rapidly. This tool is called *charda yarree*. After it is roughly shaped another tool called *charda tippa*

is used to smooth off. It is made out of a piece of sandstone or any stone with a rough surface. A semi-circular hollow to take the shape of the spear is chipped out of the face of it. This is used as a rasp. The work is held in the hand so that the workman can bear down on it, and the tool held with the overhand grip is rubbed up and down rapidly until all roughness is worn off.

A way he showed me to make fire was to rub dung up and put it on the back of a shield (*murrawaroo*). He then took a *koondi* and rubbed it backwards and forwards for a few strokes. The dung caught alight almost at once. It was fed with leaves and grass.

The Arunta stone fighting knives are very much larger than those used by the Wonkonguru. I think the reason of this is that suitable stone is more plentiful in that country. The knives here are very rarely, if ever, more than five inches in length over all, very often they are only chips set in *mindrie* pitch on pieces of bark; whereas Arunta knives I have seen are from seven to eight inches in length, and the Arunta men here tell me that in their country they use them up to as long as twelve inches.

The Arunta people attach more importance to the small knife used here, that which I have called the boys' fighting knife; they tell me that this is the type that is used for practically all purposes, as for skinning animals, for making tribal cuts on the body, and for circumcision. For the latter purpose the one edge is chipped so as to make it saw-like on that edge. The first cut is then made with this edge and the operation is completed with the keen edge.

It must always be remembered that the feelings of the person operated on are not considered in any way. It does not seem to matter to the old men how much they hurt the other fellow, and the young men consider it a disgrace to show any feeling; but by the time a boy is sufficiently initiated to be called a young man he is very subdued, and does not recover until he has assisted in the initiation of other boys.

Personally, says Mr. Aiston, I do not think they have the same capacity of feeling pain that a white man has. I have seen a man with his eye cut out in a boomerang fight who was apparently rather amused over it. Another man to whom I lent a sickle to cut some grass, cut his thumb and forefinger to the bone; his only apparent interest was to wonder at the sharpness of the sickle.

This boy started straight away on a trip with me. I gave him a piece of rag and some ointment with which to wrap up his hand. He put on the rag and never changed it until I asked him about it a week afterwards. He then took off the rag to show me, and the cuts had almost healed up.

North from Mungeranie, between the long, low sand ridges, stretch the gibbers. In patches the cotton or the salt-bush pushes through the stones; and here and there a stunted tree, mulga, "dead-finish," or *wirra*, clipped by the camels, carries on a miserable existence. Gradually we ascend, then more rapidly, until a sharp descent comes into a long basin valley. On each side it is bounded by low, flat-topped hills that jut into the plain, whilst, in the middle distance in front, there rises

an absolutely level table, sloping sharply at each end. Across the basin, straggling groups of mulga show where in flood-time the creek will run. On the east, the top of the hill is covered with close-packed gibbers of much larger size than those ordinarily found.

For many years the blacks from miles around have been drawn to this place to secure stone for making knives. The really ideal ones would, of course, be taken away with them, but many were left behind that to inexperienced eyes look nearly perfect. The smaller *yutchawunta*, or general service knife, was common and of good quality, but the long *illyawunta*, or fighting knife, was rarely found.

The ideal would be the only sort carried away, for any number could be produced for the labour of chipping. A good *illyawunta* should have the following requisites. It should be at least 15 cm. (six inches) long. One that was given to me was 23 cm. in length. The blunt end is coated with *mindrie* gum, around which hair string is wound in order to give a good grip and to prevent the *mindrie* from cracking. The knife was grasped in the fist with the point downwards, and the fighter, who was armed also with a shield, tried to gash his opponent above the knee.

The point of the knife should have a slight hook inwards. This, Tallapittie explained to me, made the stroke "bite in," that is, would prevent it from sliding outwards and so making only a scratch.

The opponents were armed with the soft-wood shields, and the leg was the only part which was regarded as fair to cut at. An umpire was always present, who inter-



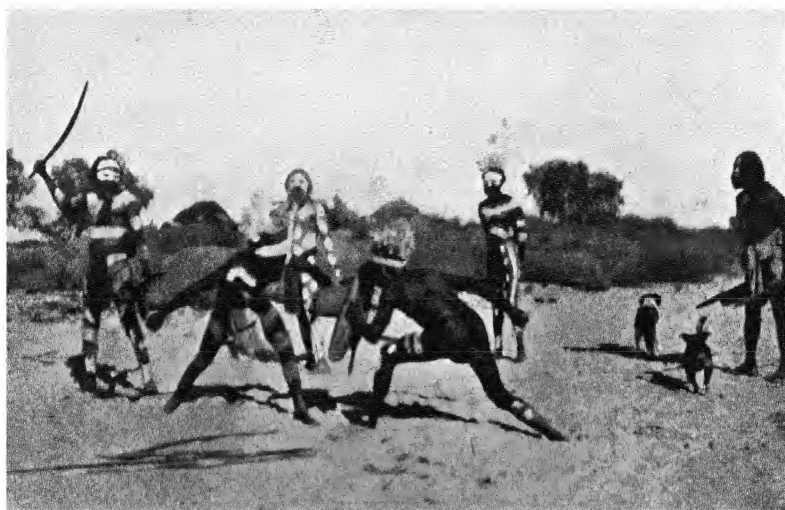


FIG. 70.—FIGHTING WITH THE *ILLYAI*PUNTA.



FIG. 71.—CIRCUMCISION KNIFE.



fered if either were severely injured. Thrusting with the point was, of course, absolutely forbidden.

I have seen several with scars at least six inches long, and some wounds must have been perilously near the femoral artery.

The *yutchawunta* was also handled with *mindrie* and was sometimes given to the boys for a fight.

These contests were, of course, ceremonial, knives never being used in actual warfare.

Another and rarely-found knife was the one used for circumcision. This is a leaf-shaped blade only about 7 or 8 cm. long. It is very flat in shape, and has the ridge on the keeled side chipped off at the blunt end in order to provide a good grip. It is held between thumb and first finger with the fist shut, and the cut is made with the elbow up and the point down, thus cutting away from the body. These were also sometimes used as surgical knives or for putting marks on the body.

The top of the hill was covered with chips, all of knives; no other implement having been there attempted. A couple of *kulkis* or hammers lay amongst the relics. They were probably always used on the place visited by the natives, for they would be heavy to carry. No one would take them away, so, although they were good *kulkis*, we left them where they lay.

No other hills with such large stones are to be found until one goes eighteen miles up the Birdsville track.

Stone implements alter very little in the hands of skilful aborigines. It is all the more curious, therefore, to find the difference between the present implements and those now found at Mungeranie. The Wonkonguru

seem to have lost several types, or else they never acquired them.

1. *The chipped back knife* is well known by the Arunta men, but is never of the long, narrow type, blunted at one end, so characteristic of the Victoria coast (especially Port Phillip Bay), of Tarwin, of the coast round Sydney, and of Singleton, as well as other places in New South Wales.

Except two semicircular and three short-pointed knives, all the specimens that I found, as well as the few received from Miller's Creek and Ooldea, are of what I have called the broad, spread-eagle type, being sharp at both ends. As a rule they are roughly made, but occasionally are of very fine workmanship.

The chipped back knife is found at Mungeranie, and there I obtained over seventy specimens, as well as half a dozen stray ones here and there on the sand-hills.

The three Arunta men, whom I questioned separately, each at once recognised them as knives. In answer to the question, "What are they used for?" they all agreed that they were employed for making scars. Two added that opening blood vessels was also a use. When questioned as to how they are employed, they all showed that the first finger was placed on the top. The Wonkonguru and Yaurorka old men either called them chips or said that they were too small to be any good. Probably the manufacture of these knives is a lost art in these tribes, or it may never have been practised here, but the specimens have been introduced by the Arunta on visits. A third possibility is that someone who lived at Mungeranie long ago employed them.



FIG. 72.—METHOD OF HOLDING *ILLYAWUNTA*.

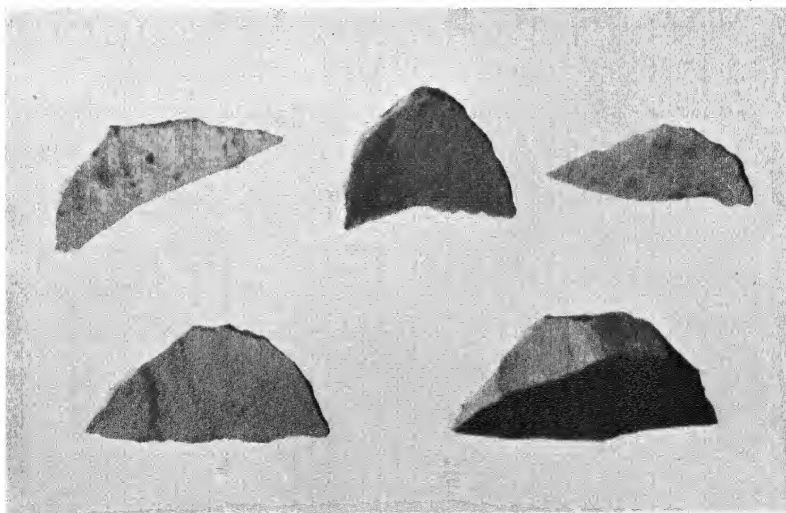


FIG. 73.—CHIPPED BACK KNIVES.



2. *The flaked knives* are very different from the larger ones used amongst the Arunta, as well as from the much smaller varieties used on the east coast. But this difference in size is largely due to the difference of material available.

3. What I have called the *choppee* is a stone roughly chipped on both sides, so that an irregular sharp edge appears. This was used in chipping other stones, as (I am told by Dr. Pullcine of Adelaide) is done by the Ooldea natives.

Only one specimen was found at Mungeranie, but it is a very definite specimen. Certainly it had been introduced by some western visitor. It is evidently not known locally.

4. *Pebble axes* are, of course, not found, as the requisite material is not present, nor have I been able to pick up anything suggesting an "eolith," or stone of a "very remote age and of rough manufacture."

5. *Polished axes* are of a very definite shape, being oval or circular, and generally have a groove at the upper and lower edge for hafting. This groove is very characteristic of the blacks, who reckon descent in the maternal line, and who live to the west of the Kulins and Kurnai in Victoria. These axes are thinner in contour than the eastern tribes used, and are often carefully pitted in part or all over, except where polished. They come from Queensland, being bartered for other commodities. Never are they the short, thick stones that are found on the east coast.

6. *Hammer stones* are used by the Wonkonguru on the flat as well as on the edge, as is done with the eastern

tribes. This method is employed down as far as the Narrinyeri on the coast, and also (so Professor Howchin tells me) at any rate as far north-west as the Macdonnell Ranges.

7. *Pounders* for crushing *nardoo* or ochre are large, oval stones similar to those of the east coast, and the flat side is the part used, never the end of a conical stone, like those picked up at Tarwin in Victoria.

8. *Anvils* are sometimes used the same way as when sharpening a stake on a stump with a tomahawk.

9. *Sinkers* are never used, as the nets are stretched across a river on trees or stakes.

10. *The nether stones* are for *nardoo*, and never have what is called by some observers a "husking" hole on the reverse side, but have a circular cavity for pounding. The nether *munyeroo* grinding stone is large and flat, often with two depressions, or if not, with one smoothed surface right at the stone's edge. The upper stone is flat and of the same material as the lower.

11. *Polishers* are also unknown, being superseded by the *muddathirrie*, the smaller flat stone with which *munyeroo* is rubbed on the big flat plate.

12. *Spokeshaves* are unknown by the Wonkonguru, though in use by the Arunta. But the small spokeshaves so common amongst the eastern tribes are never found, nor are they to be picked up anywhere amongst the Wonkonguru of Central Australia. Only one spokeshave did I find at Mungeranie, probably left by a visiting Arunta. It was large and powerful.

13. *Scrapers* amongst the Wonkonguru are of one definite pattern, that is, the *kalara*, and are like those



of the eastern coast but on a much larger scale. Its homologues, the small scrapers (*Tardenoisian*), are not found, although from near Ooldea some few rather heavy specimens have been sent to me.

14. *Tuhlas*. As the eastern aborigines do not appear to have used as adzes stones stuck on sticks, the *tuhla* is, of course, absent from the east, though some chipped stones somewhat resembling it may be found. Certainly no used-up *tuhla* has been seen in the eastern States. Yet this is one of the commonest implements found amongst the central aborigines. It marks a great and important stride in the manufacture of wooden implements. (The half-used *tuhla*, so common amongst Wonkonguru, is, of course, not found amongst the eastern aborigines, as tools mounted with gum were not in use.)

I am told that a large chipped hand-axe shaped like a gigantic double mussel-shell was used amongst the Wonkonguru and even now can be found.

#### MOUNTING A *TUHLA*

When chipping flakes from the main stone or core, called *kutna* by the Wonkonguru, all flakes that are likely to be of use are saved, some for use as knives, *yutchawuntas*, some for graving tools, *pirries*, and others as chisels, *tuhlas*; these latter are finally shaped up with a *kulki*, by chipping the top side until a clean semicircular edge is shown. The ideal *tuhla* has a clean edge with a slant to the back; in use this was found to stand work better than a knife edge, as it was stronger.

A piece of hard wood is next selected; any wood that will work up free from splinters. This is scraped

and ground until it has a boomerang-shaped curve, and is, in section, as nearly round as possible, and about twenty inches in length. The curve in it is made to keep the worker's fingers clear when using it. This when finished is called a *koondi* or *kundi*.

The next thing is to prepare the pitch to fasten the *tuhla* to the *koondi* ; this is done by digging up a quantity of roots of the *mindrie* plant. The roots are then held over a fire until a black, pitchy substance oozes out. This is scraped off with a stone knife into a *pirrha* (wooden bowl) until enough for the work in hand is collected. The whole lot is then mixed with ashes and kangaroo dung and heated in the ashes until well mixed. It is then made into a ball and left to cool. When cool it is almost stone hard.

For use this is again warmed up in the ashes, and sufficient is taken from the ball for the work needed. The *mindrie* softens with heat. It is heated until workable, and a strip is placed over the end of the *koondi* ; by this time it has hardened up again, so it is returned to the ashes. Directly it is soft enough it is taken out and worked into a ball on top of the *koondi*. The worker licks his hands all the time to prevent the *mindrie* from sticking to them. The selected *tuhla* is now held ready, and when the *mindrie* has softened sufficiently the base of the stone is pushed into it until it rests on the end of the *koondi* ; it is usually too hard again by this time, so is given a final heating to finish it off; this is done by wetting the hands with spittle and rubbing gently all around the *tuhla*, pressing the *mindrie* tightly into any inequalities that may be in the stone. The tool is now

ready for use and is called a *koondi tuhla*. A *pirrie* is mounted in the same manner.

Each man has his own idea of making a *koondi tuhla* ; some mount them with a *tuhla* (chisel) in one end, and a *kalara* (smaller scraper or cutter) on the other; others make them with a *tuhla* in one end and a *pirrie* on the other. But for the first rough work on any wooden weapon or utensil the tool used has only one stone mounted, usually a *tuhla* with a cutting edge about two inches across the arc of the cutting edge. This tool is used with a short, chopping motion, very like the way in which a carpenter uses an adze. The smaller *tuhlas* are then used more after the fashion of a gouge, the edge following the cut all the time; the same applies to the *pirrie*. Some workmen fit short handles, about six inches long, to these, for greater steadiness in working in fine lines, but the older blacks hold the short handles in contempt.

Some of the tribesmen take pride in their work and are wonderfully skilful in the use of these tools. They cut the grooves on the implements with a *kalara*, which in this case is mounted on a *koondi*. It is drawn towards the operator in a succession of jerks without lifting the edge from the wood. I have in my possession a *pirrha* (bowl) which is forty inches long by twenty-two inches wide. This is decorated by *kalara* marks running the length of it; each mark is about half an inch wide, and only two or three of the marks show that the tool had been lifted when making the cut from the one end to the other. The wooden weapons and utensils are always made when the wood is freshly cut, and is consequently soft and sappy, but it shows some skill to be

able to keep the tool on the bowl in such a length of cut. In the instance here quoted there are about thirty of these parallel lines.

#### METHOD OF MOUNTING STONE AXE-HEADS

The stone axes used by the Lake Eyre tribes were procured by barter from the southern tribes or from a tribe near Cloncurry in Queensland. After a flood in the Diamantina the blacks would make south and meet the tribes from the lower Diamantina and Cooper's Creek at what is now Goyder's Lagoon, then called Goondaritchinna. The axes would be ground, but not shaped to fit the handle. This was left to the taste of the individual who purchased it. The shape of the axe-head varied a lot. I have seen some roughly square (about three inches square), others oval-shaped. I have seen some nine inches by six inches, but many liked the smaller sizes. To prepare them for a handle a part of the edges would be chipped with a *koolkie* (hammer stone) to make a groove for the handle. Then a root of the tree locally called "white wood" (a species of acacia) would be selected. This was split, and the centre part of one half was then scraped thin with a *yutchawunta* (stone knife). A *muddathirrie* was used as a rasp, until the root was thinned down to about half an inch thick and about one and a half inches wide. At the thinnest part it was then carefully heated over the fire to make it pliable and was accurately bent around the chipped place of the axe-head. Directly the root came flat on both sides of the head a piece of sinew was bound tightly around it. The axe, with the handle, was then left to

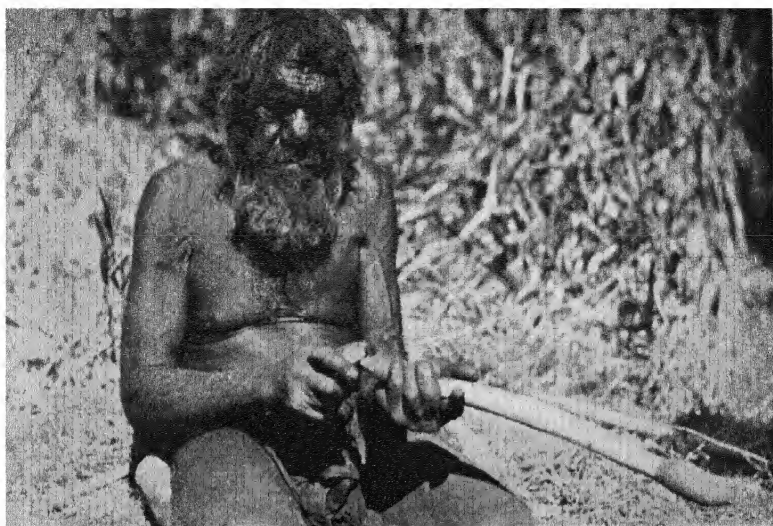


FIG. 74.—SHARPENING A *KOONDI TUHLA*.

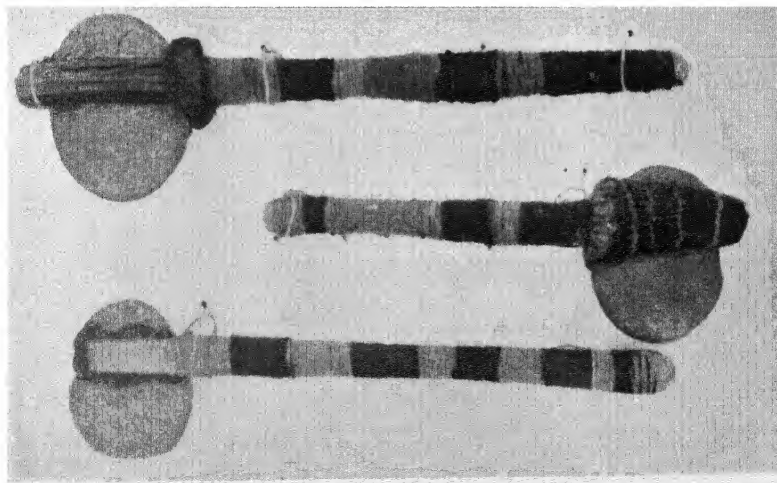


FIG. 75.—MOUNTED AXES.



cool off and set. When it was properly cooled the handle was lightly covered with alternate bands of hair string and animal fur string. The space, if any, caused by inequalities in the stone head and the flattened root, was filled up with *pooya* pitch or with *mindrie*. Some of the tribes differed slightly in the mounting, the method being the same up to the bending of the root, but instead of filling up with pitch they made a sort of collar of fur string into which the axe-head was firmly wedged. It was impossible to drive it through the handle by striking on the edge, but it was very easily knocked out if the axe-head was tapped on the back. The Urabunna old men here tell me that that was an advantage, as a handled axe was very awkward to carry, and it was usual to take only the head and make a new handle at any place where it was needed. The handled axe was called *kalara-piddina*, which literally translated means "cut-hit." The stone axe was never used as a weapon for fighting.

#### WEAPON-MAKING

Mr. Aiston tells me that in the old days, before the advent of the whites in this country, practically all of the stone tools and weapons were made by the old men. The young men and the women looked after the finding of food for the camp. The old men sat down at some convenient water-hole where there was a supply of stone for tools and wood for weapons, and put in their time in keeping the young men supplied.

Not all were good weapon-makers. Some specialised in the making of the stone tools and usually confined

themselves to these alone. Very often a man specialised in only one tool, and made nothing but that.

The most important tool in weapon-making was the *tuhla*. This is a stone chipped to a sharp semicircular edge. It was mounted on a curved piece of wood with either the triodia or *mindrie* gum; the former was called *pooya* by the Wonkonguru, and the latter had only the name *mindrie*, after the plant from which it was gathered. *Mindrie* is a wiry, bush-like plant that grows in the swampy holes on the plains. To get the gum the blacks dig up the roots, scrape them down with a stone knife until they are all scraped away; then they put the result (it looks like wet sawdust) in the hot ashes. Sometimes they hold the frayed-out roots over the fire. The gum then forms in small lumps, and these are carefully raked out of the ashes to be pressed up into a ball with a mixture of kangaroo dung.

The blackfellow then having shaped a *tuhla* to his satisfaction, takes a curved piece of wood that he has previously smoothed called a *koondi* or *kundi*, and after softening the *pooya* or *mindrie* in the fire he fixes the stone on to the *koondi*. He usually has about half a dozen of these stones ready. To make a boomerang—called here a *kirra*—the blackfellow picks out a piece of wood having the right curve, chops this off to the right length, and brings it into camp. He then takes the bark off by hitting it across the grain with his stone tomahawk. This loosens the bark until it comes off easily. He then places the piece of wood on the sand, and using his feet to steady it, chops with an adzing motion with the *koondi tuhla*. When he has chopped it down to the rough shape





FIG. 76.—*MINDRIE*, FROM WHOSE ROOT THE PITCH IS PREPARED.

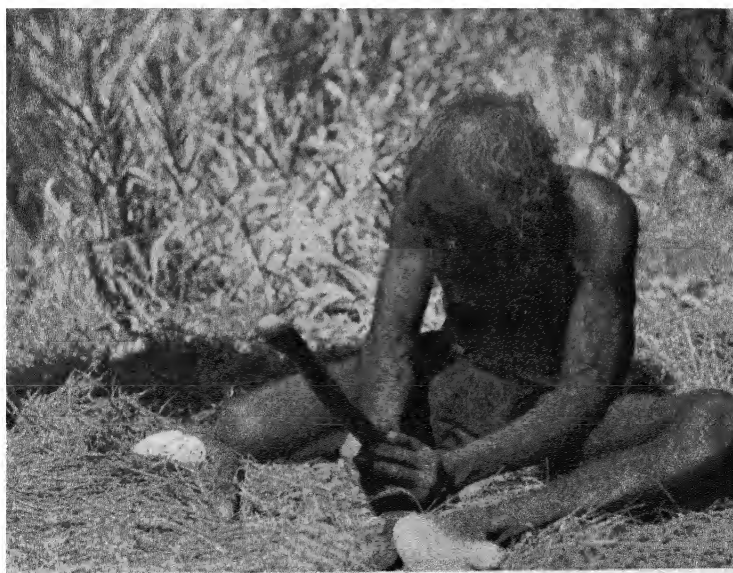


FIG. 77.—METHOD OF USING *PIKRIE*.



of a boomerang he picks up a smaller *koondi tuhla* and scrapes the chop marks off. He is continually sharpening the stone tool as he works, by chipping with the *kulki*. A final smoothing is given by rasping with the *mudda-thirrie*, that is, the upper grinding stone of a *munyeroo* mill.

The *tuhla* is sharpened back until, from having a convex edge, it becomes concave. The *mindrie* is then softened by fire and the stone taken out and thrown away and another put in its place. A good *tuhla* would make at least two boomerangs.

It is hard to think of anything a boomerang would not be used for. The making of the boomerang would stop at the stage I have described if it was to be used for general purposes, but if it was to be a war or barter weapon, it would be smoothed still more by using a hand-scraper called here *kalara*. This is very like a *tuhla*, but is not so heavy; it is made of a thinner piece of stone, and has places chipped to take the finger and thumb when holding it. With this tool the surface is made as smooth as if it were sand-papered.

The workman now takes up a *koondi tuhla* having a fine-pointed piece of stone set in the other end, mounted in gum, and holding it steady between the two first fingers of both hands he traces out the design. This tool is called a *pirrie*. Some of these are beautifully chipped; they are dainty enough to be worn as a charm on a watch-chain. It is very difficult to get a really good weapon to-day, that is, one made with all stone tools. The white men have been in the country so long that nearly every native craftsman has a piece of steel, either

a part of a shear blade or an end of a shovel. These pieces of steel are mounted on a *koondi*, but, instead of gum being used to fasten them, they are bound on with animal sinews, and nearly all the decorative marks are made with a nail mounted on a piece of wood. A friend of mine who has been in this country about thirty-five years told me of the first time the blacks used a shear blade at Berlino station. They had got up some shears to shear ration sheep, and when the blacks found out they would cut wood they could not keep the shears away from them. The blacks never rested until they had stolen them all. I have seen them here making weapons with a piece of broken buggy spring. Sharpened up it is a very effective *koondi tuhla*. They still call this a *koondi tuhla*, although it is neither. Some of the old blacks are conservative enough to refuse to use the white man's steel, but unfortunately they are very few.

Almost any sort of stone was used to make tools. I have found them in nearly every shade of colour, from white to black, but odd-coloured stones seem to have a fascination. On the chipping grounds here I have found all varieties of stone that are totally foreign to the place. At some time there must have been a master at making *pirries* here. I have found dozens of beautiful specimens. Mr. Aiston says the blacks are always trying to get him to give the *pirries* to them, as there is no one here who can make them so well. He has unfortunately very nearly exhausted the place, it being very hard to find one now. These were made, first by chipping a flake off the original stone, and the workman, by long experience, was an expert in finding the line of cleavage of any stone.

This was roughly chipped up with a *kulki* until nearly the shape desired. The *pirrie* had then the final dainty chipping, done by pressure. For this a heavy *kalara* was used. It was then either mounted in gum on a *koondi* or put away until wanted. Bags to keep the stones in were made out of string manufactured from a mixture of animal fur, human hair, and the fibres of a plant that grows in the sand-hills. The string was woven up until a circular mat was made of the size required. It was then folded over until the two edges met. These were sewn up from the bottom, with some of the same string, and an opening left at the top. The resulting bag had very much the appearance of a pasty. The string was dyed red, yellow and black, in bands usually, according to the taste of the maker. The pigments used were made from coloured ochres and charcoal. I do not think they would stand washing.

To return to the boomerang; when it was finished it was put into the water for from about a week to three weeks. It was then taken out and buried in the sand for two or three days, warmed up over the fire and saturated with grease to prevent it from splitting.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOORAS AND MURDUS, MYTHS AND MAGIC

#### RAIN-MAKING

THERE seem to be many different ways of making rain even in one tribe. Every *kurdaitcha*<sup>1</sup> man has his own method and there is considerable jealousy among them. Some claim that the method was shown them by the moora in a dream, others depend on legends, and some on traditional happenings. Mr. Aiston was an eye-witness of the following and related it to me. He says :

“The first performance which I shall describe was shown me here at Mungeranie. The legend concerning it is this. Two mooras were travelling from the Warburton river across the desert to Lake Hope (Pando), and on arrival at Mungeranie water-hole, about half-way, they found that it had dried up. Their two gins had been camped at this hole, but had gone on three days previously, after having left a sign to show when they left, and where they had gone. The mooras in a rage threw the water they had with them up in the air. They

<sup>1</sup> *Kurdaitcha* is not a Wonkonguru word and has changed in its significance. Amongst them it is applied to any man who has power of magic and who is not necessarily a *koonki* or medicine man.

were surprised to feel a spot of rain immediately afterwards. They still had a little in a skin water-bag, so they poured this into a *pirrha*, and, taking their eagle feather head-dress, they dipped this in the water and sprinkled it around. The rain kept on coming, and the mooras kept sprinkling the water, until it was all finished. They then danced with the wet *pirrha* in their hands in the direction from which the rain came. By this time it had rained sufficiently for them to finish their journey.

"I was invited to the camp to see this performance, so went down. On arrival near the place I was met by a young man, who had recently been through the first step of his initiation. He escorted me past the camp where the gins were, and explained that the old men had told him to meet me, so that I would not go to the camp and thus give the gins an excuse to come out of their *poongas*, for the gins must on no account be allowed to see this ceremony or the preparation for it. About a quarter of a mile from the camp I found all the blacks assembled. They were getting the two *kurdaitcha* men ready. A number of them cut veins in their fore-arms and let the blood from the cut drip into a *pirrha* that contained a small quantity of powdered-up red ochre. When they had got enough blood to make a thick paste they dabbed this on to the shoulders and neck of the two principal performers. They then stuck white down on to the blood. This was done until the head and shoulders were completely covered. A net bag full of white down was then pulled over the hair. One of the performers was a magically stronger *kurdaitcha* man than the other. He claimed that he had the power to

make himself invisible. So he threaded a hoop of thin root through his head-dress, that had down stuck on it with blood and ochre, as proof of his invisibility. Two *pirrhas* were next prepared, with three transverse bands of down stuck on, one in the middle and one at each end; the other *pirrha* had two rows, each of two bands close together. At about this time one of the gins in the camp put her head out of her *poonga*. An old man quickly picked up a large *inchitcha* (bull-roarer) and sounded it angrily. The gin went back into the *poonga*. A discussion then took place, and finally it was decided to send the gins out hunting, away from the camp. The old man then picked up a smaller *inchitcha* and sounded that. The gins and piccaninnies immediately came out of the huts and hurried away from the camp in the opposite direction from where we were, and the men then went on with getting ready. A dish was filled with water in which two or three pieces of rain-stone (clear gypsum) were immersed. Bunches of eagle feathers, that had been stripped from the quill, were then placed near the two *pirrhas* and everything was ready. All of the men then placed themselves in a semicircle behind the two *kurdaitcha* men, who took their place near the dish. The whole crowd commenced to sing in a monotonous chant, gradually dropping their voices until they got as low as they could, then one would start off again with a fairly high-toned 'Hey' or 'Hah,' and the same words were repeated over again. After a few minutes of chanting, one of the *kurdaitcha* men got up, and holding his *pirrha* by both hands scooped up some water out of the dish and picked up a bunch of eagle feathers; he



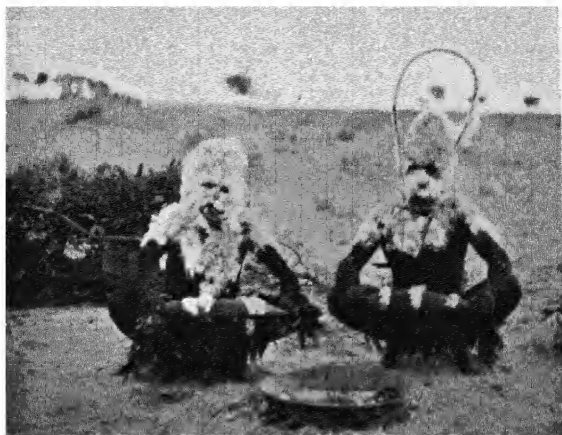


FIG. 78.—PREPARING FOR RAIN-MAKING CEREMONY.



FIG. 80.—EMU BONE FOR PIERCING THE ARM.



then danced stiff-legged over the dish and for about ten yards in a north-westerly direction. While he was dancing he threw the water in the *pirrha* first to the right, then to the left, then in front, and so around to the right again. When the *pirrha* was empty he stopped and walked back and sat down and the other went through the same performance. The bunch of feathers made a swishing sound with each throw of the *pirrha*. This was to imitate the sound of rain falling. The quaint thing about the dancing was that it was not in time with the singing, the singers seemingly not having the slightest interest in the dancer. Their whole mind seemed to be taken up with their chanting. After about fifteen minutes of this, one of the *kurdaitcha* men said 'Finish,' and the performance was over. The down was rubbed off and the bodies of the two *kurdaitcha* men were smeared with a mixture of fat and red ochre. The performance was repeated until it rained or they got tired of it, as usually happens if the weather sets in clear."

The words of the song are :

<i>Pirrie ilta</i>	<i>Pirrie ilta</i>	<i>Pudna loolara</i>	<i>Pudna loolara</i>
small grow	small grow	bush big	bush big
<i>Hah</i>			
finish			

The word *pirrie* is untranslatable into English, but it means anything small, or anything that makes a small mark, such as the tiny crack that a young plant makes when breaking through to the surface.

After this performance was finished there was some

argument with the older men. They claimed that this *ungobbera*<sup>1</sup> was no good, no one had ever succeeded in making rain with it. The two performers were rather indignant at this and dared them to make it any other way. One old Yaurorka man took up the challenge and told me how the moora made rain near Mirramitta.<sup>2</sup> In this case the two mooras were going back from Lake Hope to the Salt Creek, a distance of about 100 miles, without water in a dry time. When they got to Wappalanchie water-hole they found it dry. In despair they picked up some clear gypsum (*toona*) and tried to melt it. One of the mooras in a rage threw it at the other and struck him in the stomach. The other moora then threw some back, and at the same time growled at him. The two of them, after a wordy war, fought until they were exhausted. To their surprise they found that while they were fighting it had been raining. They made peace and then tried to find out what had made it rain. First they pretended to have a quarrel, but the rain had stopped. They then tried singing, but nothing came of it. At last one lost his temper and threw a piece of *toona* at the other moora, when at once it started to rain again. They then collected a lot of *toona* and took it in turns to break it on each other's abdomen. And it rained until they had enough water to get home.

This performance was shown me, but unfortunately the men who showed me were half dressed and were in such a hurry to show the Wonkonguru *kurdaitcha* men, that I could not get very good pictures. They drenched

<sup>1</sup> *Ungobbera* is a ceremonial or corroboree.

<sup>2</sup> Obviously this is the result of some mixture of the tribes.

both myself and the camera with the water they sprinkled to imitate rain.

Another rain-making performance has apparently been adapted from a snake-making ceremony. It was told me by an old half-caste who had remained with the tribe until he was made a man. Shortly after he was taken away and educated. He is a successful drover to-day, and a very intelligent man. The performance he described was what he had seen over fifty years ago. In this the two performers first go out to where it is possible to find the clear gypsum (rain-stone). Immediately a suitable piece is discovered it rains a little, just enough to let the tribe know that the stone has been found. The two men then bring the stone into the camp and the tribe make ready. Any of the men who have been through the first stage of the initiation may take part. Their bodies are painted with a mixture of red ochre and fat. They then sit in a double circle facing each other. Between each couple is placed a *pirrha* filled with water. Into the *pirrhas* a number of finely-ground emu bones are placed, the bones being about eleven inches long, pointed at both ends, and about a quarter of an inch in diameter. The whole circle then starts to chant, and the man on the inside ring picks one of the bones out of the water and thrusts it through a fold of skin over the muscle of the upper arm of the man opposite, then the one who has been pierced puts a bone through the arm of the man in the inner ring. When they have put the bones through the skin of the arm, they push some through loose flaps of the thigh, and finally through the skin of the scrotum. This is kept up until all the bones are used.

The resulting blood is caught in the *pirrha* and the performers drink it after the ceremony.

I have just received a letter from Mr. Aiston at Mungeranie in which he says : " We have not had a drop of rain and things are very bad. Old Koonki is trying the Yaurorka method of making rain and has pierced his arm in twelve or fifteen places. There are more dead horses than live ones along the road."

This ceremony is very similar to the snake-making ceremony that is practised on the Diamantina, and I think the two ceremonies are identical, but having been taken from one tribe to the other the meaning has been mistaken. Mr. Aiston states: "I saw this ceremony performed about eight years ago on the Diamantina and was told that it would make hundreds of *womas*, or snakes. I was told they would be so thick on the sand-hills that I would not be able to ride through them. I am sorry to say that the only *woma* I saw on the trip was a very small one, about twenty miles from where the ceremony had been performed."

The *woma* is a species of carpet snake, very harmless, but greatly in favour with the blacks as food.

These ceremonies read impressively, but to one watching them they seem futile. There is so much time taken up in preparation and so little in performance that one wonders at them ever starting. I think that the innate love of display and dressing-up that is so large a part of the aborigines' pleasure is responsible for much.

The performers and the tribes generally do not seem to have much faith in their ability to make rain, but they boast a good deal when they have the luck to fluke

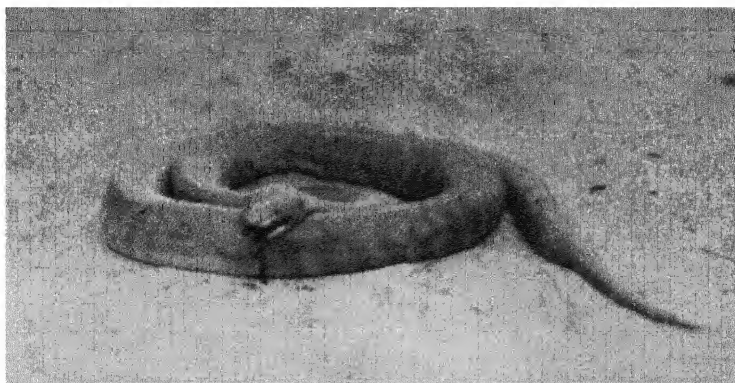


FIG. 81.—A *Woma* OR CARPET SNAKE.



FIG. 82.—KOONKOO NUTATACULLIE.





it. Somebody always gets the credit for having done the trick every time it rains, but still the rain-makers get to work every time it looks cloudy. One old *kur-daitcha* man that I asked about not making rain, one dry time, answered me : " No good make 'em rain this time. Too much dry fella. By and by cloud come up, me make 'em rain."

While the performance is going on the audience are laughing and chatting and indulging in horseplay at one another's expense. Of course if it does rain after a ceremony the chief performers score. They are spoken of all over the country as successful rain-makers, and one that gets this reputation is often invited to visit other tribes. While there he will be an honoured guest, and will be treated as a headman. He may possibly stay with the other tribe indefinitely.

Koonkoo Nutatacullic is the chief rain-maker of the Wonkonguru. He made forty points of rain last year, so at present he is in great favour. His methods are rather different.

The making of rain is of supreme importance to the aborigines, but its actual occurrence is so rare that the blacks' faith must often be severely tried, and many excuses are necessary to account for the failure. Either an opposition man's magic is too strong, or, as they explained the continued dry weather after trying three months ago, " Too much not chuck 'em white fella clothes," or, as Koonkoo said at that time when asked to try his hand, " No good try make 'em rain, no clouds." 5.63 inches or twelve rainy days a year is the average fall in Mungeranie district, so rain-making on any

particular day must depend largely on luck. Every tribe has its own method, but my good friend Koonkoo Nutatacullic last year made, for the Yaurorka, a fall of six inches without going away from his own camp. He is frequently asked to visit other places and bring them rain, but he has a very bad reputation for having "boned" people, so he prefers to remain where he is under the protection of Mounted Policeman Aiston. We went over to his camp on Monday to see if we could persuade him, and even took over a big slab of crystalline gypsum obtained from beyond Kopperamanna. There was plenty of similar stuff at Mungeranie, but from this place alone proper rain-making *toona*, or gypsum, has to come.

Old Koonkoo said he would try, but not on that day, as it was necessary to soak the *toona* in water all night before the trial. On Tuesday when we visited his camp we found a pole put up with a tuft of emu feathers (*multara*) at the top. This is for a token that rain is being made. The women and children were in the huts (*poongas*), or, if they came out, were careful not to come in the direction of the ceremony.

About two hundred yards away, near a dry creek, there was a little protective screen of box-tree boughs, piled up in a curve, about ten yards long. The front of this curve faced the south-east and was partly walled in by five large boughs of needle bush (*trigunta*) stuck upright in the ground. It is the needle bush whose roots are dug up and placed, in lengths, in a *pirrha* or wooden bowl to drain, and thus supply a scanty drink. On one side, around a little fire, sat four old men, the

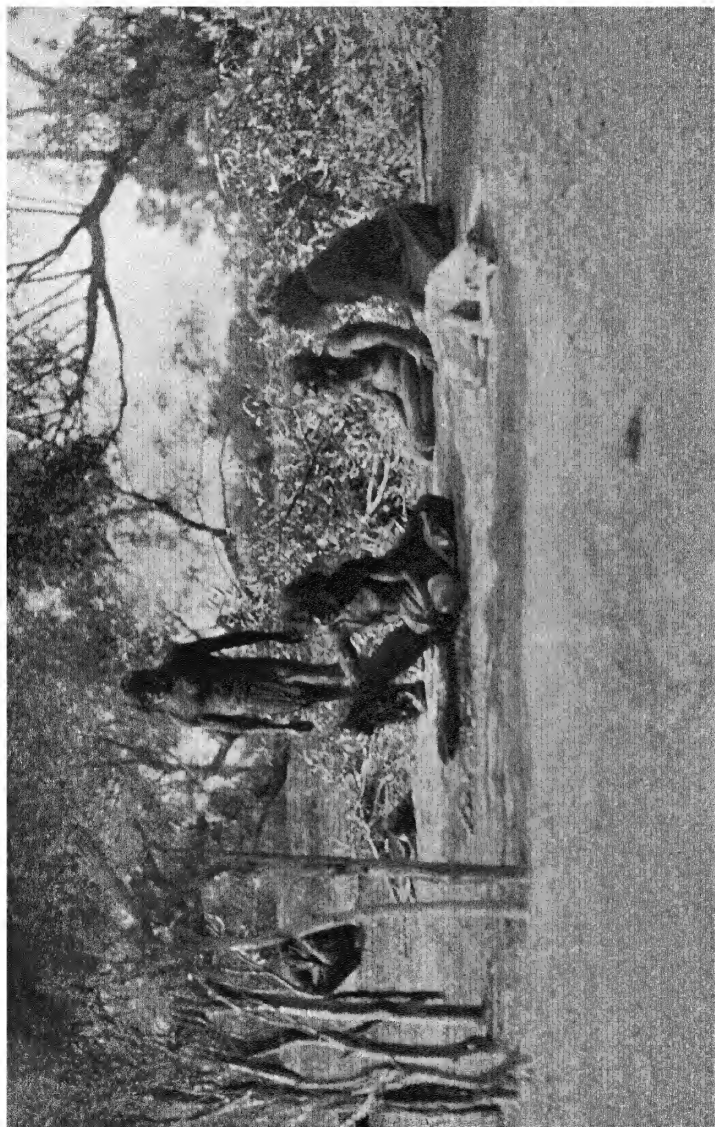


FIG. 83.—RAIN-MAKING.



*koonki* splashing the *toona* in a *pirrha* full of water, Mannillie with a bunch of eaglehawk's feathers, and two others who joined in the monotonous chant of "Ila-a-a" with a nasal intonation. On the other side of the little space, which was swept quite clean, stood the *dunpara*. This is a platform made by sticking four stout forked sticks into the ground and piling upon them five other logs. Upon this, I was told, they could put their jewellery. Afterwards it was explained that their jewellery was just anything they had, implements, food or decorations, so that it should not be washed away in the anticipated flood.

The four then got up and gathered in the centre, the *koonki* placing the *pirrha* containing water and the *toona* upon a mat of buck bush, alongside of which lay a large stone. When the rain commenced, which it might do at any time, the stone would be used to smash up the *toona*.

Through an archway, purposely made in the needle-bush screen, we could see them very well. Mannillie slowly waved his eaglehawk plume. The *koonki* rocked the *pirrha* up and down, chanting in their own language "*Wée—er wee—érlerra*," (or "swallow—come—fly"). They would all join in with a call to the great wind to blow, interpolating personal remarks in Wonkonguru dialect. This continued for some time, then the *koonki* again started with

*Digidigéllera*

Oh, dotterel

*waroo*

(bird of the) white

*eroonta*

breast.

The others joined in, each naming a moora whom he

specially regarded. After a seemingly endless repetition of this, the *koonki* up-ended the *toona* and bathed it in the water; all the time the other three squatted round gazing fixedly at the stone. Then it was carefully lifted out and placed upon the buck bush, whilst with both hands the *pirrha* was lifted up and its contents solemnly emptied. The monotonous chant recommenced. With the *pirrha* held in both hands and upside down, the *koonki* got up and, legs astride, advanced by short shuffling jumps. He jerked his burden repeatedly to the right and then similarly to the left. When he was well clear of the archway the *pirrha* was tucked under one arm and the other hand extended horizontally and then to the heavens, whilst the invocation continued. Having come forward about four yards by these little, three-inch jumps, he turned round and retraced his steps the same way. Then he sat down and the ceremony was complete.

The next day it rained. Not much certainly, but still a few drops. Old Koonkoo Nutatacullee, the *koonki*, came to say good-bye to me, for we purposed going home. "Make 'em big big rain, you wash away, no go home," he explained, when told that it was not coming down sufficiently to register. He graciously accepted some tobacco and some flour, and I thanked him much for his forbearance, for with six inches and the Cooper in flood we would certainly "no go home."

#### BELIEFS

The aborigines have the faculty of persuading themselves that they possess supernatural powers, for they

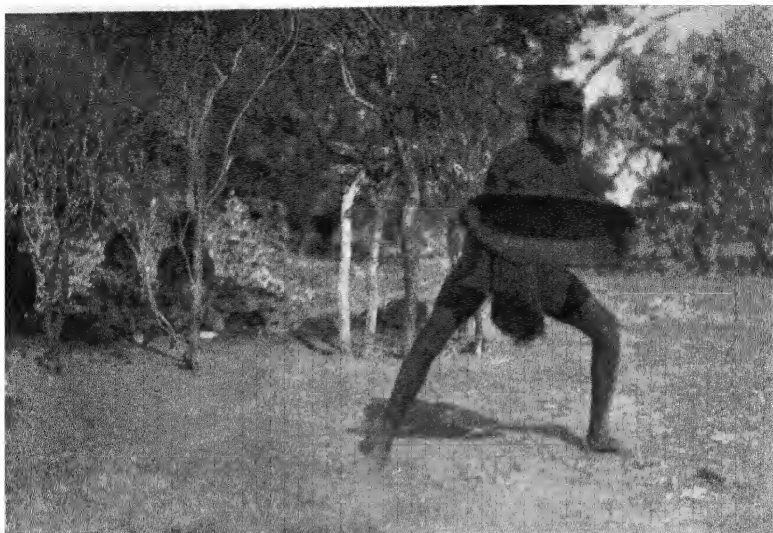


FIG. 84.—RAIN-MAKING BY *Koonki*.

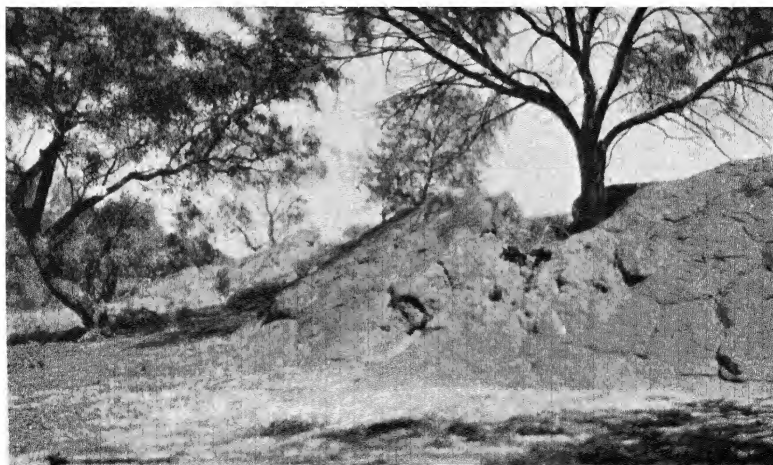


FIG. 85.—ROCKS NEAR LAKE KANDRAMOOKA.





think that supernatural beings exist who have an influence over them or over the elements. This influence they believe they can bring into action or can guide by means of certain performances or ceremonies.

These powers and these beings are so different from our beliefs that we are apt to ridicule, or at any rate to belittle them, if not openly, yet certainly in our own minds. For instance, bone-pointing is regarded as absolute nonsense, and to our superior knowledge it certainly looks so. Now the black argues thus :

I point a bone at a man, that man dies. Nothing could be clearer than the cause and effect. The flaw in the argument is the omission from the premisses of the fact that the victim knows or thinks that the bone has been so pointed. Take, again, the example of rain-making, which more often than not comes wrong. An excuse is always ready to hand. In the *koonki's* last effort, I hear since that the alleged reason of failure now is the presence of the cinematograph, "All time turn 'em handle too much wind, *pudney* rain," was the remark.

Their belief in the present existence of mooras is not more unreasonable than Conan Doyle's faith in fairies or the physical being of ghosts <sup>1</sup> as shown by their photographs. Our fathers' fathers well remember seeing witches punished, who were not any more guilty than those whom the *pinya* has executed for magic. It was about four years ago that an old man of Ngangamallana boasted that he had killed people by lightning. This he believed so firmly that as a consequence he was killed. Even knowing that the man's relatives were waiting

<sup>1</sup> By ghosts I mean the appreciable existence of the dead.

to bring about his death, he still asserted that the lightning was caused by him.

Another instance of belief in one's power is afforded by the *koonki* who sucks stones, nails or wire out of a man's chest and thereby the man recovers. That he does cure is certain, that he put the stones, etc., into his own mouth before sucking them out is also certain. "Thy faith hath made thee well," might truly be said to this man, who was quite cured after having a two-inch wire nail extracted by the *koonki* by sucking. He had had a pain in his abdomen. After treatment he believed that he was quite cured. So he was quite cured. But the *koonki's* actual belief that he produced the articles by sucking is hard to understand. What one cannot grasp is such an example as is given by Dr. A. W. Howitt,<sup>1</sup> of a man who possessed these powers and lost them. He then believed that he could no longer suck stones out of another, and so he surrendered what was a position which brought him credit and went back to mediocrity.

Apparently the *koonki* feels that producing the wire nail will make the man well, and so it is forthcoming. He trusts to his own reputation and dignity to push home the belief.

### MURDUS

Mr. Gason (Gason, *N.T.S.A.*, 1879, p. 260) says: "After the Creation, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and others of the closest kin intermarried promiscuously, until, the evil effects of these alliances becoming manifest, a council of the chiefs was assembled to consider in what

<sup>1</sup> Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 409.

way they might be averted, the result of their deliberations being a petition to the Mooramooras."

The answer came back to this, and the whole system of *murdu* was then first introduced. By this rule the people of the tribe are divided into several totemic groups, as the carpet snake or *woma*, the eaglehawk or *karawora*, the black cormorant or *tantani*, the red ochre or *karku*, and others (Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 92). These may not intermarry in their own group, that is, *woma* may not marry *woma*; but black cormorant, male, can marry *woma* female, and the children will then be *woma*. That is, the children follow the *murdu* of the mother.

Intercourse between father and daughter is, of course, absolutely forbidden. Formerly the punishment for disobedience of this rule would be death, but now the station hands disregard the *murdu* and are not interfered with. In the camps, however, the rule is still strictly observed.

"We do it because our fathers did it," is the usual cry when asked the reason for a custom or a performance. Such an innovation as the introduction of *murdu* to improve the race seems to be quite beyond the ideas or capabilities of the present-day aborigines or even their immediate ancestors. This would presuppose then a mentally depreciated race.

We come back, therefore, to the theory put forward by Sir Baldwin Spencer and quoted by Dr. Howitt, "that the relation between totemism and exogamy is merely a secondary feature, the primary functions of the former having probably been in existence before the latter became established" (Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 151).

There seems to be an analogy between the sex totems of the Kurnai of Gippsland, Victoria, and some of the beliefs amongst the Wonkonguru.

"With the Kurnai," says Dr. Howitt, "the Yuriing (emu wren) is the elder brother of all the men, and the Djiitgun (superb warbler) is the elder sister of the women. The killing of one or other of these two was an insult to the sex they represented" (Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 148).

Whilst my companion was taking photographs on the big sand ridge, I made friends with a little pintie-pintie or wagtail (*Rhipidura tricolor*). In ten minutes it became so tame that it would eat flies out of my hand. It followed us for two miles up to the camp. Seeing the pintie-pintie playing round me, one of the men volunteered that it was the women's bird and chaffed me on the subject. When asked if they would eat it, they indignantly answered, "No." If, however, a man wanted to tease the women, they said, he would kill one and bring it into camp on the end of a *kirra*, but he must be prepared to fight them. "*Wadna* hit 'em," was the remark.<sup>1</sup>

I have not been able to discover a corresponding male totem, if such exists.

## MOORAS<sup>2</sup>

The Wonkonguru group, which includes amongst others the Dieri, Yaurorka and Ngameni, seems to have a sort of ancestor worship, the ancestors being the mooras.

<sup>1</sup> I would be hit with the digging-stick.

<sup>2</sup> Muras or Mura Muras.

A moora sometimes appears to have been a master-mind who was the first to discover anything, or through whom anything was first discovered or done. They were the first to fashion human beings out of lizards,<sup>1</sup> and they formed the sun. To them is attributed the making of *murdu*s or totems, and ceremonies or corroborees invariably have the moora behind them, instigating or appointing, and thus giving them authority. The old men maintain their influence partly by receiving communications in dreams from the mooras. They thus tell where to sink for water and where game may be found. Animals, as well as inanimate things, have their mooras, and, as Dintibunna said, "Every man has a moora," a remark that was another day repeated to me verbatim by Koodnacadie.

Sometimes one may originate a whole tribe by leaving potential spirit children in rocks or in trees,<sup>2</sup> whence children are born to women who come in contact with them. For that the father has anything to do with conception is absolutely foreign to the native mind.

Sometimes two, three, or more may be the ancestors of the tribe. This is the case with the Dieri. Rarely has a man a definite moora to himself, as has Dintibunna, "the maker of the *kirra*," and in his case the name is handed down through his mother.

The moora, one hears them say, cannot die, but yet many of their legends turn on the death of the individual moora. It seems that though dead they yet live, and in this "spirit" existence they appear far more to be

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 396.

feared than if really alive. One reason, old Nutatacullie told me, for the *kurdaitcha* shoe being worn was, *not* to prevent its being tracked—that would be easy—but rather to cause the uncertainty of knowing *what* was being tracked. It might be a moora. What would happen if they did meet one, nobody could say. Like meeting the Boojum in Lewis Carroll's *Hunting of the Snark* :

“ They would softly and suddenly vanish away  
And never be heard of again.”

It may be so, I cannot tell.

Stones often appear to commemorate the death or disappearance of a moora. Trees sometimes spring and seem to have grown up where the moora first came or last went. These trees are, of course, never cut down, nor are those into which their ancestors have been metamorphosed. All these objects are endowed with magical force, and are often avoided as *kootchi* (uncanny) if they represent the moora and have his powers. The reverence paid to mooras is largely the reverence of fear, and anything strange or unusual is set down to them. The Aurora Australis in this way creates great alarm, and to appease the moora indiscriminate intercourse is practised. This is, of course, quite against the old men's advantages and may therefore be looked upon as a sacrifice on their part.

One little stone of a peculiar yellowish appearance, and not found in this district, is called moora's *yakarra* (or teeth). It is to be kept for a charm. Carefully wrapped up and never to be looked at by woman, the

old *koonki* gave it to me as a token of his gratitude for having lanced an abscess in his foot. He is very grateful, poor old chap, and comes in five miles from his camp. Now that I have gone, he wanders round like a lost sheep, so Aiston says.

Mooras' toc-nails were also given to me. They are very small *tuhlas* and implements of various sorts, but are of semi-transparent chalcedony, such as I have had from beyond Miller's Creek, midway between Lake Eyre and Tarcoola, but are not found within 200 miles or more of this country. Being unknown here they were ascribed to the moora.

No ceremonies seem to have been performed to propitiate the mooras. But at some corroborees their *wananga* (or emblem) was carried around and in some sort venerated. This does not appear to have been practised in the Wonkonguru coterie. In the rain-making ceremony, the moora seems to have the power of "causing the clouds to appear in the heavens" (S. Gason), and he also could prevent the performance being successful. At it, too, as it was performed by the *koonki*, Koonkoo Nutatacullie, the men in their chant each called on a moora.

In the women's corroboree, which we witnessed, two of the men represented mooras, and these had a bunch of box-tree leaves tied to each ankle. With their violent high-stepping action a rustling noise was made. Without this they would not be seen, being mooras and therefore invisible.

## OCHRE MYTHS

Between Parachlina and the Meadows a peak of the Flinders Range runs out lance-like into the plains. Between this peak and the main mountain range the scattered eucalyptus trees mark the dry track of the water-course. On the high bank one can see a huge red scar. Concerning this, Mr. E. G. Waterhouse, nephew of the late explorer of that name, tells me the following legend. In the old days, before men were, there lived in this valley a jecko lizard. Adno-artina was his name. Every day this lizard would climb a big rock and would sing aloud so that all could hear, "Come out and fight, Come out and fight." Now the big dog Marindi came past that way, and hearing the challenge, he bounded up the dry creek-bed yelling all the way, "I am come, I am come." Adno-artina had a look at the dog. He saw beneath his sharp pricked ears the enormous fangs. He saw the huge bulk over which waved the white tip of his tail, and the more he looked the less he liked the prospect of the combat. "I will fight you later," he said. "Later you will make a feast for my pups," returned the dog as he curled himself up at the foot of the rock. Now, like all jecko lizards, Adno-artina sees best when it is dark. So as the sun went down he tied a hair string round the root of his tail to make him fight better, for then his courage could not run into his tail. It was now dark, for when the sun goes down the darkness springs out. He crept to the ground, and once more "Come out and fight," rang forth his challenge. Marindi the dog leapt up and tried to catch Adno-artina



by the back of the neck and shake the life out of him. But the lizard ran in low beneath the terrible fighting teeth. He seized the dog by the throat and hung on. In vain Marindi shook him and scratched at him with his claws. The sharp teeth sank in and in, until at last the red blood spurted out. And so from that time on all jeckoes—now but a puny race compared with their ancestor—have a constriction round the root of their tails.

The blood of Marindi the dog dyed the rocks on the banks of the creek, and from this the red ochre is obtained to this day.

The little creek became the Mecca, not only of the Kooyiannie, but also of the Dieri, the Wonkonguru, the Ngameni and the Yaurorka tribes. There only could the real dog's-blood ochre be obtained, and none other should be used. With the coming of the white man the owners of the ochre became feebler, but they still hospitably received the fierce Wonkonguru and others who came from Lake Hope to barter shields from the far north for the dog's-blood ochre. According to custom women were lent to the visitors, but they did not return alone, for the women of the Kooyiannie accompanied them and helped to bear their loads. Vengeance, however, awaited the next ochre party. While they were digging out the precious red stuff, the dog's blood jumped out at them and smothered them beneath. It is an actual fact that about 1870 a landslide took place which buried several of the aborigines. Since then the place is of evil omen and is shunned.

The same story is told by various tribes. At Cowarie,

where the Ngameni and the Wonkonguru meet, the cliff of the Derwent on the eastern side rises high above the opposite sloping bank. A deep rocky hole tunnels its way into its steep face, and opposite it two box trees grow. How old they are it is impossible to judge, but probably the present ones sprang from the stumps where the former trees grew; for though the aborigines may thin out a tree they will never chop one down.

Crooked-foot Peter, the headman of Cowarie, whose camp is a few hundred yards away, tells the following story :

“ Trees two moora emu jump up. Dog him live in hole. Chase 'em emu. Emu run. Dog run. Pass 'im Killalpaninna. Pass 'im Dulkaninna. Pass 'im Apawandinna. All time emu run. Dog run. Pass 'im Farina. Pass 'im Beltana. Emu him run up big hills. Dog him catch 'em emu. Kill 'em. Blood him jump out. Ochre grow. Lot good ochre.” This, as near as I can remember, is the story in Crooked-foot Peter's own words. And ever since, he tells us, the good ochre came from this district. From Queensland, the Cloncurry tribes sent their bean-wood shields in exchange. From N.S.W. were traded the light shafts for spears. From Alice Springs worked *kirras* were sent. Then, loaded each with 50 lbs. of red ochre, they begin their toilsome way homewards. Over 300 miles they must travel, keeping clear of hostile peoples, through whose territory they must pass, if necessary, by force; for though the message-stick is carried to those who own the ochre, it does not seem to have held good with those whose territory the expedition passed through, and with

these they must fight unless they followed the regular trade routes for barter (see Walk-about). When at last they reached their destination great rejoicings welcomed their safe return.

### KILLALPANINNA AND DITCHAMINKA LEGEND

Legends, mostly associated with mooras, are generally quoted to account for all natural phenomena, as well as local landmarks. "How night came" is an instance in point. The sun moora, so I am told, was walking idly across the world one day, when he saw a woman, who with her *wadna*, or digging-stick, was burrowing after the *wadroo* root. The moora seized upon her and at once began to carry her off. However, the husband returned. He was very angry, and, as is the custom, vented his wrath upon the woman. Seizing his thrusting spear he drove it, stabbing, into the lower part of her abdomen (*kirrala* or *killala*). Immediately, from the rent, a great gush of water issued. It poured out until it became the Killalpaninna Lake. The moora, however, escaped, but so annoyed was he, that he sank and sank, until at last, at the place now called in memory of the event Ditchaminka, he plunged into the ground.

To this day is shown the hole in the stony plain where the sun disappeared.

### DINTIBUNNA (Come back, finish).

The mooras were often the apparent inventors of useful things, but quite often, as in the previous legend, they owe their fame to their misdeeds.

Yelkapelloo, a moora, in his wanderings came across

two moora women. They were occupied in the task (somewhat unusual for women) of making a *kirra* or boomerang. He insisted on thrusting his company upon them. They seem to have resented his intrusion, for, going back, they first finished their *kirras*, then sought out the moora and killed him with them. Their child—whose was not stated—was named Dintibunna, which literally translated is: "Come back, finish." The name seems to have continued, being handed down through perpetual generations, for the story was told me by Dintibunna, the maker of *kirras*, who danced in the welcoming corroboree at Mungeranie. He remarked, "*Moora parchoonaoni*," or "Everybody has a moora."

### MAGIC

Generally speaking, anything out of the normal is attributed to magic. Any unusual stone, any abnormal growth, a deformity at birth in the case of a child, are all *kootchi* (uncanny). While hunting or travelling the aborigine was always on the look-out for any stones of unusual shape. If any were found that were small enough to carry home, they were taken and shown to the assembled old men. These invariably identified the stones as something to do with the moora, and usually invented a use for them. If the stones were too big to shift they were also accounted sacred, and in the course of time legends sprang up about them. This happened in the case of the rocks at Kandramooka. These rocks were unusual because they happened to be in the bed of the Cooper, where the dried silt is many feet deep. There are no similar rocks within hundreds of miles of them

to my knowledge, therefore to a blackfellow's reasoning they must in some way be connected with the supernatural.

In dealing with this subject one can only touch on the edge, as there is so much that exists only in the imagination of the *kurdaitcha*<sup>1</sup> men practising the various ceremonies that it is impossible to give in detail. I will first describe the stones and ceremony of charming the *wirra* bush to grow. *Wirra* bush is a species of acacia (*Acacia salicina*), and is used by the blacks when chewing *pitcheri*.

The two stones used in this ceremony are very like miniature hammer stones, which in fact they are. They range in size from some one and a half inches to some two and a half inches in diameter, and are usually worn very smooth through having been carried about. They are passed on from one generation to another, and very possibly they have been in the possession of a family for hundreds of years. It is very good magic to have them, and the older they are the more valuable they are. This ensures their being looked after very carefully. One that I have is a petrified mussel-shell, and this, I was assured, made it very valuable, for it showed that it had at some time belonged to a moora, who had turned it into stone, to make it "more strong."

In use these were brought out after a rain and the whole of the initiated men of a tribe gathered at the sand-hill where the *wirra* bush was wanted to grow. Each man had two of these stones (they were called *murrallacardia*). A seed of the *wirra* bush was then placed on

<sup>1</sup> Vide note on *kurdaitcha* men, p. 110.

one of them and hammered with the other, while the performers danced around the spot where the bush was wanted. The performance was kept up until all the seed that had been brought out was used up.

Another stone that was used in this ceremony was called *kunchera warroo*. It represented the white inside of the seed and was planted where the *wirra* tree was wanted. It was a small white quartz pebble, usually about one inch in diameter, roughly circular, and about a quarter-inch thick. These stones are very plentiful around Lake Harry, but are rather scarce in the Wonkon-guru country, so they were bartered from the Dieri people or were sometimes given as gifts. These were deemed of as much importance as the *murrallacardia*, as without them the plant would not know where to grow.

Another stone used in plant magic was called *yelka*. This was roughly semicircular, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter across its widest part and about half an inch thick. It was used to ensure a plentiful supply of *yauas*, a small bulb-rooted plant that grows very plentifully in the watercourses (*Cyperus rotundus*). Half an inch of rain will make these grow, and they are in great favour as food. The ceremony of making sure of a plentiful growth was very similar to the *wirra* bush ceremony, only in this case the seed was not ground. All the men present provided themselves with as many *yelkas* as possible, and dancing around a suitable flat in a water-course, they threw the *yelkas* broadcast in every direction. Directly the *yauas* made a show above ground the *yelkas* were picked up and saved for another occasion. The song for these two ceremonies was the same :

<i>Charrili</i>	<i>Charrili</i>	<i>Koppara</i>	<i>Charrili</i>
Roots	roots	plant	Roots
<i>Charrili</i>	<i>Koppara</i>	<i>Nunta.</i>	
roots	plant	grow.	

This was chanted all the time the ceremony lasted.

Another magic stone was the small tusk-shaped yellow stone that is occasionally found among the gibbers of the plains. These were called *moora yakarra* (moora's teeth). They are not used for any ceremony, but are kept to ensure good luck.

Obsidian bombs were called *warroo getti*<sup>1</sup> *milki* (emu eyes), and were supposed to be eyes that the emu had lost when walking about looking for food. These when found were smeared with fat and red ochre and were stored in a net bag full of emu feathers, kept together by being wrapped around with hair rope.

When a mob of emus was seen to be feeding near to a deep water-hole every able-bodied man went out and they got around them. Then they built fires and made plenty of smoke to chase the emus towards the water. Only *kurdaitcha* men took out the *warroo getti milki*. The rest of the men were armed with *kirras*. When the emus were driven near the water the *kurdaitcha* men opened their bundles containing the *milki* and threw them at the emus. This made the emus blind, and they could then be easily driven into the water. The rest of the hunt then closed in and killed the birds in the water with their *kirras*.

Obsidian bombs are in very great demand as luck-

<sup>1</sup> *Warroo getti* is emu.

bringers. As soon as possible after a tree has been struck by lightning some blackfellow will dig around the roots to get what he calls the lightning stone. Any of an unusual shape are carefully treasured. An old fellow, when leaving, gave me one that was almost perfectly circular. He put it in my hand and asked me not to look at it until after he was gone, and said that I would have very good luck. This has struck me as one of the inconsistencies of the blacks. They are horribly afraid of lightning and will on no account use the wood of a tree that has been struck. But they value the stone that is to them the visible sign of the lightning.

There are several magic bands made out of fur or hair strings. The most important that I have come across is called *tutta*. This is made out of the marsupial rats' tails and a twisted string made from sinews. To render it valuable a small piece of human hair is worked into it. This hair must be cut from a person, either man or woman, at the moment of death; if taken either before or left for any time after death, it is of no value, and instead of protecting its wearer it may turn on him and do him harm. The charm is worn as a protection, and if lawfully acquired, no harm can happen to the man wearing it. But if it has been stolen, or taken by force or fraud from its rightful owner, it will first make the one wearing it bleed at the nose, then it will give him pains in the back, and finally blood will come from his stomach through the mouth and he will die. One of these was given to Mr. Aiston's tracker for him by a camp of bush blacks. The blackboy coveted it, and, instead of giving it to him, he told him that he had given a pocket-knife



for it. "I offered to buy it from him," says Mr. Aiston, "but he refused to sell. The hair that was in it had been taken from the head of one of my house gins who had died. This made it more interesting to me. Some little time after, the boy came and offered me the *tutta*; he told me that 'It all the time make 'im bad.' I offered to pay for it, but he refused payment, telling me that it was given to me in the first place and he had kept it wrongfully. He said that he would get better if I took it and kept it. The boy did look ill, but I think a guilty conscience had as much to do with it as anything."

Another charm used for protection is called *tharta*, and is worn at night, sometimes around the forehead and sometimes around the waist. It is made of hair string smeared with red ochre and fat, mixed up into a stiff paste, so that the finished *tharta* has knobs of red ochre sticking out all over it. This will give warning of any danger. If a snake comes into the camp it will prick the skin of the sleeper. If an enemy comes to the camp it will squeeze the man and wake him. So long as he wears it no harm can come to him while asleep.

Another charm, very similar to this, is the one called *nalta*. This is made of rabbit's fur string, dipped in a thin paste of red ochre and water. It is worn by the headmen of the camp when they want to dream. The moora will sleep with them when they wear this and will reveal different things that they want to know. If a part of an *ungobbera*, or corroborree, has been forgotten and none of the old men can remember it, the moora will remind the wearer of it in a dream.

It will also make the wearer dream of forgotten water-

holes, so that when food is scarce around the regular waters it will enable the old men to take them to a virgin water where the food will be plentiful.

*Kurdaitcha* shoes are in a very doubtful class when called magical. They were very necessary, for in the old days the tribes were continually at feud with one another and the track of every one of a tribe's own people was known. A stranger crossing their country would be tracked down and killed as a matter of course, so they had recourse to boots made of hair rope and emu feathers; these effectually disguised the tracks made by their wearer. The fear of the uncanny kept a hostile tribe from attempting to track an unknown man, who might be a moora, so that the wearer got a certain amount of liberty. Another use was as a protection. Hard as a blackfellow's feet are, they cannot walk on the sand or stones of this country in summer without some protection for their soles. They had to wear their *kurdaitcha* boots as a matter of course. When they were not being worn they were slung over the shoulder and were used as a handy bag for anything that might be wanted at any moment. The stone knife *yutchawunta* was usually carried in it and any small animals that were killed and cooked.

One *kurdaitcha* man here, who claims that he has the power to make himself invisible, has told me frequently that the only thing he used *kurdaitcha* shoes for was to save burning his feet on the hot stones when walking and to carry food.

They are very neatly made, the hair being first made up into string with a spindle, then a feather quill is twisted into one end and the boot is made by a style of sewing

that is in its result very similar to crochet-work. The feathers to make the sole are threaded in quill first, and are packed as tightly as possible. It is almost impossible to pull them out of a finished boot without breaking them.

### HOW FIRE CAME TO PERIGUNDI

This is the tale of how fire came to the tribes in this country as it was told to me (G. Aiston) at Lake Perigundi: I had ridden into the lake, which was dry at the time, and from the top of a red sand-hill I had seen a small white sand-hill to the east. I told my boy that we would camp at the white sand-hill. The boy was a man of about forty-five years. He did not like that camp, but said nothing. When we got in I unsaddled and hobbled my horse and went down to see if the soak wanted cleaning out. When I came back I found that the boy had pulled the pack-saddles off, a couple of hundred yards from the white sand-hill. I asked him why, but at the time he did not give any satisfactory reason. After we had tea, he said, "That hill where moora sit down," pointing to the white sand-hill. I asked him which moora and he replied, "Moora Moora Paralana!" And this is the tale as he told it to me: "Long time ago before the white man come to this country" (he meant Australia) "a moora come up from down country, and make a camp over behind that big sand-hill over to the west. Just about sundown he come over to see the moora Paralana and find him eating raw fish. The down country moora say to moora Paralana, 'What you eat raw fish for? You like him?' Moora Paralana say, 'Fish all right; which way you eat him?'

Down country moora say, ' Me like to cook them, more better that way.' Then he ask this moora to come over to his camp and he would show him. Over there the down country moora made a fire and put some fish on the ashes and tell moora Paralana to wait a bit. When the fish was cooked the down country moora gave some to this moora and told him to eat him. The moora Paralana eat all that fish and another one that the down country moora cook for himself. He cook some more and at last he fill up this moora.

" Then the moora Paralana ask him what he call this thing he use. The down country moora tell him it is called fire. He then ask down country moora to show him how to make it, and when he learn properly how to make fire the moora Paralana kill the down country moora and bring the fire over to this sand-hill. He camp here then all the time and make the other blackfellows bring him tucker and young women. By and by he get two young women who not want to stay with him. They wait till he is asleep and they take a fire-stick and clear out. They show all their people how to keep fire alight and after that they are mooras."

I asked him, " How about the down country moora ? I thought you could not kill a moora." The blackfellow said, " This one dead all right. You see them two little salt lake us pass this afternoon, that where moora cry because he lose fire."

#### MOORA LEGEND, LAKE KANDRAMOOKA (DIERI TRIBE)

Six mooras, five men and one woman, were camped at Booltarkininna, and in the morning before they got

up two birds called Palpara (a sort of hawk) mischievously stole their fire and flew away to the north with it. It was very cold weather and the mooras realised that they would die of cold if they could not get a fire, so they followed the birds till night. They were then near Kandramooka Lake, and realising that it was no good to try to catch up with the birds, they camped for the night. As it was very cold they all lay down in a heap, the woman in the middle. In the morning all the men were dead, but the woman, through being in the middle of the heap, was alive. On seeing this she called the place *Nunku purrini* (literally, cold lie down). The mooras had turned to stone, which remains to this day. The moora woman, whose name was moora moora Kuti, then went in search of a fire-stick. Going south she saw seven girls with a fire each near Manu. These, directly they saw the moora, jumped up into the sky, taking their fires with them. These girls became stars which are now known as Monkira. The moora woman travelled on until she came to Lake Gregory (Pianguru). Here she saw an old woman, whose name was Nardoochilpanie, who was pounding *nardoo*. The moora woman was on a sand-hill, called Nunkaninna, and wondered how to get the fire from her. First she thought of going down as a dingo, then she thought of turning into a snake, then thought of turning into a bird, but each thought was rejected as it occurred, because each of these were easy to kill. At last she decided to go down as an old woman. When she reached the fire she made a grab at it, but Nardoochilpanie hit her with her digging-stick (*wadna*). The moora woman threw the stick into the lake, where

it formed an island. The two then fought, and all the things in the camp, *nardoo* stones, *pirrha*, *kirras* and everything that was movable, were knocked into the lake, and as they fell they turned into islands. Finally the moora woman killed Nardoochilpanie. She then turned into a swan and flew away, carrying the fire-stick in her mouth. This is why all black swans have a red edging to the inside of their beaks; it is to show where the moora burnt her mouth when carrying the fire-stick.

The moora moora Kuti settled near Booltarkininna, where she died and was turned into a heap of rocks. The signs of the fight are still visible at Lake Gregory (Pianguru—literally, bird's-thigh) in the shape of twisted and distorted stones. These stones are the bodies of the two women as they twisted and fought.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEATH, BURIAL, POINTING-BONES AND SANCTUARY

#### CANNIBALISM AMONG THE WONKONGURU

CANNIBALISM was not a general practice among the Wonkonguru, but was more of a rite. In some cases it was a precaution against magic, and in one case that I heard of it was to ensure food.

The tribes to-day are ashamed to admit that they ever ate human flesh, so that it is difficult to obtain much reliable information. I have only heard of two instances, and both were told me by white men. The blacks admitted the truth when I told them who my informants were and the full particulars.

The first case was related to me by a man who came up to this country about forty years ago. He stated that in 1897 at Apawandinna, half-way from Cowarie, a very fat blackfellow chased an emu, and became overheated and died. The blacks were very worried over the death. They examined the man but could not find anything to show a cause for his death. He was a good-natured man, very popular with the tribe, so that it was unlikely that he had been "boned." Finally the old men decided to cook the body. They cut it up and distributed it right around the camps of the tribe, which at that time extended from Killalpaninna to Birdsville in Queensland. This was done and my informant saw

the pieces of flesh that were sent away. The idea of the old men was that if the dead man had been "boned" his flesh would poison the man who had "boned" him, and anyone who was innocent would be protected from such a death by eating a piece of him. I talked it over with one old man who had eaten, and he told me that he had done so in order that the rest would not think him guilty of "boning" the dead man. He put it this way: "'Spose 'em me no eat 'em. 'Nother fella say, Him kill 'em. Me eat 'em, then all right."

Another instance that I heard of happened near the Queensland border about 1910. In this case the wife of a settler, Lew Reece, was told by one of the house gins that the camp people were going to kill and eat a baby that night. She hurried down to the camp to stop them. When she got there she found the baby was already cooked. She saw it in a *pirrha*. As it was too late to do anything more she waited for her husband to come home. He went to the camp directly he arrived, but the body was gone. The blacks would not tell what had happened to it. But years after they admitted that it had been eaten. These particular people would never admit to me that this had happened, but other blacks told me that it was done so that there would be a plentiful supply of fish in the Diamantina that season.

In this connection it is queer that an aborigine cannot eat pork. "I have tried them with it in all ways," says Mr. Aiston, "but, even when they do not know what it is, their stomach will reject it. They can eat bacon, if not too fat, but fresh pork seems almost poisonous to them. Some few years ago I helped to kill a pig at



Killalpaninna and took some of the ribs (uncooked) to grill, for food, on my way home. I had one rather hard-case boy with me who would eat anything, and also another young boy. The hard-case one advised me to send the boy away until the ribs were cooked. We did this and grilled the bones and then we called the boy back. When he came we assured him that the bones were beef bones and he took some, but had hardly got it down when up it came again. The hard-case boy ate his all right, but asked me to take some home for his wife. He was anxious to see if it would have the same effect on her. We got some home, and I asked him the next day as to the effect on the woman. He told me it had made her sick 'alla same.' At the time he told me that man meat was about the same as pig meat and nobody liked to eat it. He, of course, indignantly denied that he had ever eaten man meat, and stated that 'old man talk that way.' We could never persuade the woman to eat even bacon after that."

It is a well-known fact that certain articles of diet cause vomiting in certain people. This happens whether the person is conscious of eating the particular thing or not. For instance, egg albumen will in some people produce violent retching. In others an attack of asthma may be induced by eating brains.

### TRIAL AND PUNISHMENT

When a man has been a persistent offender against tribal law, or has used magic too freely, the tribe decide that it is time to call him to trial; so they send out a summons to an *ungobbera* (corroboree), calling in the

offender and his friends. The offender does not know that he is being tried. His behaviour in the camp for the time that elapses whilst waiting for the ceremony is carefully considered, his speech is listened to, and anything he says that might incriminate him is noted for use at the ceremony.

If the offender is too boastful he will most probably be driven from the camp in a few days by the women, the men taking no action.<sup>1</sup>

When all the tribe are assembled the *ungobbera* fires are lit and the council is started. First, by an old man<sup>2</sup> who describes the tribe, praising its *murdus* (totems), and then goes on to its victories in fighting and in hunting. After the old man has finished, the man who has the greatest complaint against the offender takes up the singing and recites all his grievances, never mentioning the name of the offender. At the conclusion of the song the whole of the men give their vote<sup>3</sup> as to the offender's guilt. This they do by calling out *Wah*. The offender gives his vote with the rest. If there are a lot of grievances, or if they concern serious offences, the *ungobbera* will last until the whole list has been gone through. The accused is the only one who does not know who the offender may be, and his verdict is noted in each

<sup>1</sup> This is absolutely correct; seen by Vogelsand and Bognor.

<sup>2</sup> This has been heard a dozen times by us, G. Aiston, G. Horne.

<sup>3</sup> Aiston, from Vogelsand and Bognor—whites who were present; also Boko Jimmy, Tallapittie, Robbin and Koonki. "Koonki," or "doctor," was the gentleman's title—Koonkoo Nutatacullie was his name. He was always spoken of and to by the title Koonki, so that this was treated as his name. He died a few months ago.

case. On the last night, after the list has been exhausted, the tribe have a *mindarie ungobbera* (corroborree). When this is finished the question is asked as to whether the offender is guilty, and if so what punishment is to be given. He gives his vote, and if he votes against the accused the *ungobbera* is finished. The old men then tell off the party who are to carry out the sentence. If any of the tribe's people have lost a relative through the witchcraft of the offender they are usually given the task of executing retribution. From that time the offender is an outlaw, and unless he can get into sanctuary, he dies.

There are certain places where he is safe, as Kannawaukaninna near Killalpaninna, in the Dieri district.<sup>1</sup> Possibly Mungeranie in the Wonkonguru district is another. If he does not reach one of these he can be killed at any time. The usual thing, however, is to kill him at sunrise, generally just as he is waking.

During 1917 a blackfellow was killed at Killalpaninna by the tribe. He was a noted *kurdaitcha* man. One of his favourite boasts was that he was able to make lightning strike where he liked. He claimed to have killed a white man and a black woman by lightning. The daughter of the woman (who had actually been killed by lightning at Innamincka) was in the camp at Killalpaninna and demanded that he should be brought to trial. The tribe sent over to Murnpeowie for the old fellow and he came to Killalpaninna. In the camp he was always boasting of his powers, and at last the women drove him out of the camp with boomerangs.

<sup>1</sup> This was a sanctuary when Vogelsand first went to the Dieri.

He went into Nganangana Lake and camped there. The tribe went out and made a corroboree ground near his camp and invited him to attend. The *ungobbera* lasted a week. On the last night the old fellow gave his verdict that the accused was guilty and voted for death. The woman whose mother had died and her man were told off to kill the accused. In the morning the offender, who happened to be the oldest man in the camp, woke up and, as is usual, commenced to recite, in a singing voice, the mighty deeds that he had performed in his life.<sup>1</sup> He came to the incident of the killing by lightning at Innamincka, when the son-in-law of the dead woman called from the camp below, "Oh! brother, I come up and fight you." The old man called back, "Oh! brother, come up and fight me now and I will kill you with lightning the same as I killed the white man and your mother at Innamincka." Hearing this, the woman rushed at the old man and hit him in the ribs with her digging-stick (*wadna*). He fell down and the husband hit him on the head twice with a stick and killed him. At this stage another blackfellow interfered and said, "No good hit him any more. Him dead now." The tribe then came out of their camp and buried the old man straight away. They shifted to another flat about two hundred yards away and prepared for a *mindarie ungobbera*, which was held that night. In the morning the people dispersed to their own camp, and the two that had actually killed the old man went into Kannawaukaninna, in sanctuary. In conversation afterwards with the man who had interfered

<sup>1</sup> I have heard it in the morning.

after the old man was killed I asked him why he did not interfere before. He said, "Me can't stop 'im. Must kill 'im." There was a risk that some of the old man's people would demand a trial of the two for the killing of the old man, so they stayed in sanctuary for about two years. Up till about 1920 there were about five old fellows in sanctuary there who were wanted for tribal offences. The above is a summary of the police report on this killing.

### POINTING-BONES

The pointing-bone is called *wirra garoo* by the Wonkonguru, but *mokooellie duckana* by the Dieri.

Pointing-bones are used by both sexes (there is no difference) and consist of a bone or stick having bands marked round it and a hair string stuck to one end. Each man makes the bones to his own liking, but, of course, he follows out the general patterns that have been used possibly for centuries. Some are made fairly broad, others long and thin. Some are made out of needle-wood, which is a very deadly type. The pointing-stick is marked around with circular bands in groups of from three to five in number, and each series finishes with a deeper burnt ring. These bands determine the life of the person aimed at, for as each is burnt the man is supposed to get more sick, and when the burning reaches the deep band the man dies. Each series of rings, therefore, represents one life, so that at one pointing four or five persons may be affected; and by the time the stick is completely burnt the whole lot will be dead.

The method of using a bone varies slightly. If one man has sufficient confidence in himself he will seize the bone in his left hand with the two fingers extended along it. He then takes up the hair string with his right hand and pulls it tight against his right hip, and kneeling down points towards his enemy's camp. If he wants his enemy to suffer from venereal disease he sings the snake song, and if he wants him to get fever he sings the dirt song. After he has finished the song the point of the bone is covered with *mindrie* pitch to keep in the poison that has been sung into it, and the man then waits until he hears that his enemy is ill. The bone in the meantime is buried in a hole in the sand and covered up with feathers. When the enemy becomes ill the bone-pointer digs up the bone and burns about half an inch off its point; he then covers up the burn with *mindrie* and again hides the bone. The sick man in the meantime, suspecting that he has been "boned," steadily gets worse. His friends travel in all directions searching for the man who has "boned" him. If they find a partially burnt bone it is brought to the sick man, the *mindrie* is taken off the point and the whole bone is immersed in water. The sick man usually then gets better. If he dies later it is suspected that the friends did not get the right bone, and a search is made for his enemy. Usually some man who is a general nuisance to the camps is finally settled upon as the one that did the "boning," and then, unless he can get into sanctuary, he is killed or at least badly knocked about.

Another method, if the one man does not feel strong enough to kill his enemy, is to get another man who has

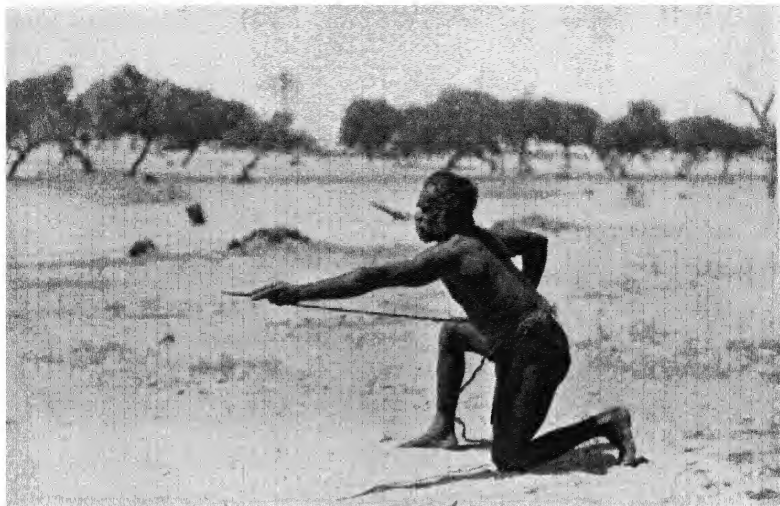


FIG. 86.—BONE-POINTING.

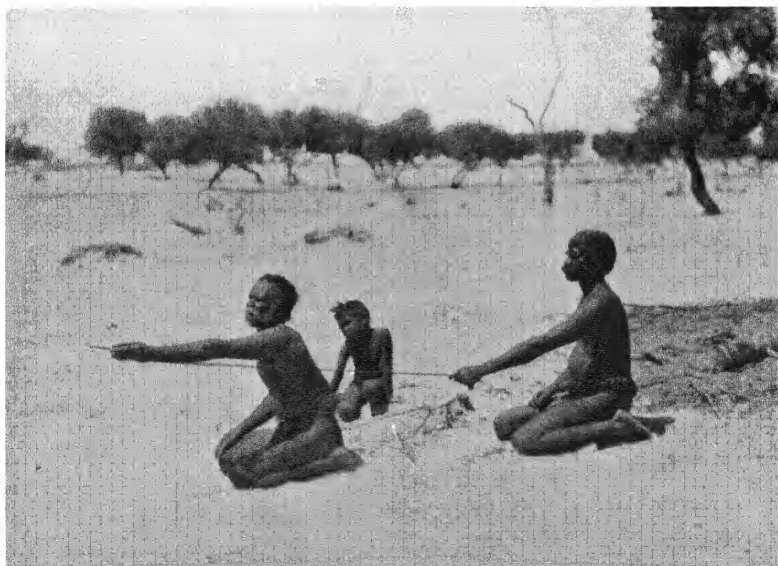


FIG. 87.—BONE-POINTING WITH AN ASSISTANT.





a dislike to the common enemy to help him. In this case, the one of the two who is stronger in magic takes the point, and the other kneeling behind him, they both sing the poison song. This method of "boning" is considered the best, but it has the weakness that the secret is shared by two, so that there is a danger of the fact leaking out. Then a party of the sick man's friends immediately start searching for the two. If they are found they fight, usually until one or the other is killed. Sometimes peace is made by the two producing the bone. If this is done it is taken back and immersed in water.

The male children are taught the use of the bone almost as soon as they understand anything, the father sometimes getting the boy to assist him, but the boys very rarely use the bone until they are made men. Young girls very often "bone" a man who has refused to have anything to do with them. In this case they usually boast of it, hoping that the young man will be frightened and come to them. A young half-caste of this district held himself superior to the full black women and would not have anything to do with them. They in revenge "boned" him. Shortly afterwards an epidemic of typhoid fever ran through the country. This half-caste and many others went down with it. He was sent to hospital and finally discharged as cured. He went to a township in the settled country to recuperate, and one night, having gone to a dance, he got warmed up, and going home caught a chill. Pneumonia set in and he died. The women boast to this day that they were the cause of his death.

In the event of the bone not being found, every few days another half-inch is burnt off, and by about the tenth day the remainder of the bone, with the hair string and *mindrie*, is burnt. The sick man usually dies very soon after. I think myself that the patient is watched, and every time he gets worse a bit of the bone is burnt, and a little is saved until it is apparent that the sick man cannot live much longer, and then it is burnt. The blacks are very frightened of the bone magic and it is impossible to persuade them there is nothing in it. They distrust white man's medicine because it is not strong enough to cope with the poison of a bone.

#### BURIAL

Directly a man dies his body is brought out from the *poonga* (hut) by the men. It is straightened out and thoroughly looked over, to discover if there is anything that will show who has pointed the bone at him. (Death is never ascribed to natural causes, unless the person has been killed in a fight.) After the body has been thoroughly examined it is tightly bound up in hair or fibre rope until it is a stiff package.

A grave is then dug about three feet deep or less, and the body put into it and covered up. All the personal belongings of the dead person are broken at the grave of a man so that his spirit will not come back and use them. Women's are not broken. The covering of his *poonga* and the sticks to make it are also put on the grave, and then wood is piled on top. The wood is provided so that when the dead person "jumps up" he will have a supply of firewood handy, and the sticks

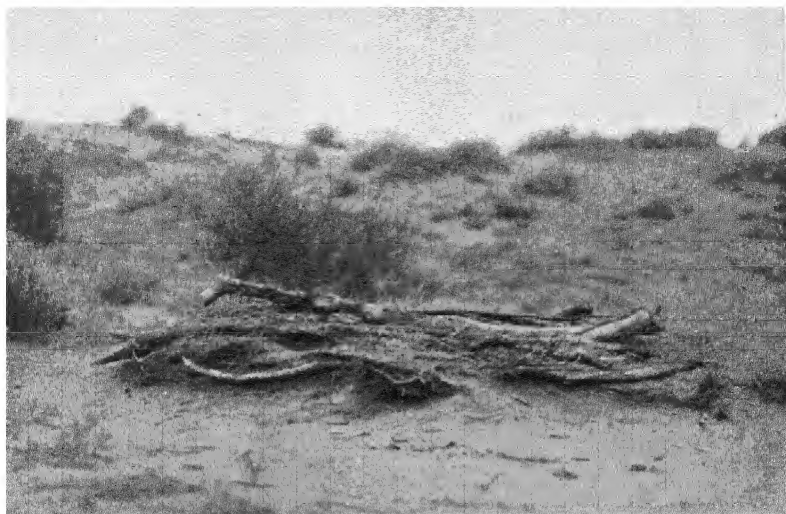


FIG. 88.—GRAVE BETWEEN SAND-HILLS AT COWARIE.



and hut covering are put there in case it is cold when the dead man comes back, so that he can build a shelter.

The body is nearly always buried near water, but this does not seem to be essential. I think the reason is that all the old blacks stay in permanent camps near water, and any sick that may be in the tribe stop with them instead of going hunting. There is no arrangement of graves; they are dug anywhere. The only consideration seems to be that the ground shall be soft and easy to sink in, as the only tools used are the woman's digging-stick (*wadna*) and the woman's bowl (*pirrha*).

Sometimes the grave is lined with herbage, but I am of opinion that this custom may have been taken from the Kooyiannie blacks, who also line the grave and cover over the corpse with vegetation.

### MOURNING

There is very little sentiment concerning death with the natives. They laugh at the contortions of anyone dying,<sup>1</sup> but immediately a death occurs all the camp unites in a dirgeful crying, which is kept up every night for a week. If a man dies his widow makes a cap of burnt gypsum (called *mulya* by the Wonkonguru). This cap fits right over the top of the skull down to a line with the eyes in front, and is about three-quarters of an inch thick. It is sometimes called *mungwarroo* (forehead white). She also covers her body with a paste of *mulya*. The netted bag shows its imprint on the *kopi* head cover (*mungwarroo*). All other relations,

<sup>1</sup> Witnessed by Aiston, Crombie, and others.

male and female, no matter how distantly related, cover themselves with this paste, the hair matting up into ropes with it. This is left on until it wears off. The widow wears her cap for a week, a month, or longer, but after one week she may be visited by all the men in the camp.

If there is a man among her visitors who is of the right *murdu* (totem) for her she smashes up the cap and lives with him straight away. Usually in practice the woman and another man have arranged to live together before her man has died, for directly an aborigine lies down he is deemed "finished," and very little notice is taken of him. Sometimes one, more kind-hearted than usual, will look after him occasionally, but if the sick person remains ill for a long time he is reckoned a nuisance, and his wife will flirt with anyone. For some time after a death it is not proper to say anything about it, nor to mention the name of the dead person. If a woman dies while her man is away from the camp, it is not right to tell him that she is dead. He is supposed to discover her grave himself, but in practice someone usually gives him a hint.

Concerning burial amongst other aborigines, Mr. Waterhouse, late M.C. at Beltana, tells me the following facts:—The Blinman natives on the north-south line, he says, bury their dead in a shallow trench with their feet to the east and laid on one side. Immediately over them heavy sticks are piled, and these are kept down by a layer of flat stones. On the top of all a very little earth is put. A half-circle of earth is made of that dug up when forming the grave, and upon this bank

the *kirra* and other weapons are put, but they are never broken.

With women a *wilpie* or rough hut is made at the head, and upon this the *wadna* and any other of their goods are placed. The Blinman natives also swallow lumps of the liver of the dead, the mother eating of the child, and vice versa.

On the Corrong (Narrinyeri) a platform was made upon which the dead were placed (Newland, *Paving the Way*).

On the Murray River near Tailem Bend they were always buried in the contracted position and a layer of clay was plastered over the top. When this cracked it was held that the cracks indicated where the bone-pointer who caused the death was to be found.

On the Paroo they also employed the contracted form of burial, and they used to hit the relatives on the head, to "make 'em sorry."

Amongst the Wonkonguru I have examined the graves in seven places, including fifteen burials. They are always placed in the same direction as the sand ridges lie, which is roughly north and south. Near the head of one grave a plug of tobacco had been placed, and on another a *wadna* had been laid. Frequently one found traces around the grave of *kopi*, or gypsum, with which they had painted themselves. The length of mourning is entirely voluntary.

When Chunmullie, who lived near Lake Howitt, died, his widow married in a week, for her lover came up from Mirramitta. She had to cut her hair very short in order to get rid of the *kopi*. For amongst the

Wonkonguru they do not follow the practice of wearing a head-covering and plastering the *kopi* on top of that.

Mr. Aiston tells me that when the influenza epidemic of 1919 swept the country there were no less than four widows at Karrathunka, towards Birdsville, and all of them were of under six weeks' standing. They asked Tallapittie, the tracker, to send down a man whom they thought to be camped at Birdsville. However, Tallapittie met him at the Eight-mile, that is, only a little way on, and so he sent him along. On returning from Birdsville a week later it was found that all the women had discarded their *kopi* and had cleaned up. One of them had succeeded in capturing him; which, the man did not care.

#### SANCTUARY

Law, amongst the aborigines, may take some trouble to set in motion, but once decreed, it moves swiftly to its consummation. One thing only can save a man indicted of some tribal offence, and that is to take sanctuary.

If he flies to some other district, where his tribal law does not run, he is a stranger there, and strangers are killed on sight. If he remains in his own country he is outlawed, and anyone finding him can without blame put him to death.

South of Killalpaninna, however, is a large tract of country where a convicted man is safe as long as he remains there. Parallel with the Cooper, it runs <sup>1</sup> for about ten miles. Then the boundary on each side turns south to take in Etadunna with its well and Blaze's well.

<sup>1</sup> Vogelsand, senr.



Kannawaukaninna Creek flows, when there is a flood, through the middle of the area, and gives its name to the whole sanctuary. The sanctuary is, strictly speaking, in Dieri ground, but all tribes alike held this place sacred. Sometimes there fled thither those who feared impeachment, and they stopped until time had established their cause, but most often the fugitives lived and died in the place. Seldom, however, is the chance given to the guilty man to make good his escape. Often he is convicted, not knowing that a trial has taken place, or he is despatched at daybreak when just awake.

The district round Mungeranie is regarded as sanctuary, but this probably is a growth of later years, and rather it is that the white law is strong and is there enforced by a strong man. There was a rumour that Koonkoo Nutatacullie would have been impeached for "boning" the woman of Peter Pinnaru of Cowarie. He was warned in time and made for Kannawaukaninna, where he stopped for three years. When Mr. Aiston came as M.C. at Mungeranie, he left the Dieri country and lived comfortably in his own land.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VARIOUS RITES

#### CIRCUMCISION AND SUBINCISION

WHEN a boy is considered old enough, or when it is noticed that he is too much with the young women, he is sent on a round of all the camps of his tribe to advise them to be at a meeting-place that is appointed on a certain date. The time is not fixed to a week or two, so that there is plenty of time to spare. Before going on this round the old men tie a chaplet of black and white animals' tails around his head, so that the tribes visited will know for what purpose they are wanted. He is always accompanied by an older man. When he has visited the last camp he is given a tuft of red and white cockatoo feathers to take back with him. This he must produce before he can be initiated.

While he is away on this trip, which may take months, his father is arranging for the men that are to perform the ceremony. These have to be paid, and it is a point of honour with a father to get as many as he can afford. There is no limit to the number, but five is about the usual thing. This number places the father above any possibility of reproach on the score of meanness. The prices paid vary much. One man boasted to me that his father had to pay as much as five bags of *pitcheri*

for the five performers at his initiation. Others pay with weapons, the payment being settled by agreement amongst themselves. The local members of the tribe arrange for a stock of food for the visitors, and they will starve themselves to be able to make a good feast when the rest of the tribe arrives.

When they have all come to the place of initiation the boy is caught and a shell, *kuri-turuka* (or *coorie-toorooka*), is hung around his neck by a cord made from the fibres of the broom bush. He is then shown the various tracks of animals, birds, etc., and told which of these are good for food. Certain animals are prohibited, and these are also shown to him. This part of the ceremony is really an examination, for he has been taught the various tracks from earliest childhood. He is sent away from the camp when the ceremony for the night is finished. The next morning he must make a smoke to show where he is, and his female relations answer it. He is brought in again in the evening, and the examination in animals is continued until the list is exhausted. He is then shown how to make fire, and is told of the big fire that destroyed all the camps along the Warburton and Diamantina rivers, and how to paint himself in memory of this, and the precautions he must take when making fire. When he has been told everything, the initiated men lie down one on top of the other until a pile is made about two feet high. The boy is then lifted up on top of the pile, and a man takes hold of each of his limbs, and one presses down upon his chest. Another stands between his legs and pulls the foreskin out as long as he can, at the same time

singing to make it stretch out longer. When it is stretched out as far as it will go, the men with the knives come from behind, so that the initiate will not see them, and each make a cut, pushing the knife away from their own bodies. Each of the number paid for by the father has a cut until the foreskin comes off. If one of those using the knife has a girl of marriageable age and of the correct *murdu* (totem) for the boy, he has the right to make the first cut. His daughter then must be saved for the initiate. As each one makes his cut he passes out of sight, and after the operation is over he meets the boy and casually greets him. This is so that it will not be known who had hurt him. After he has been further directed and taught he is sent away from the camp, and must stay away until his wound is healed. His mother and his mates of his own age may visit him, but he must on no account let himself be seen by any of the old men or young women. When he is properly healed he is brought to the camp and is taught the relationship of the sexes, and how he must treat the women of the different *murdus* (totems). He is then painted and decorated with feathers, and is allowed to wear the *coorietoorooka* at any ceremony. This is his badge that he is initiated. There does not seem to be any recognised place to wear this. Some tie it on the end of the beard, others hang it around the neck, and others hang it from their waist cord in front. They do not like parting with these shells until they are certain that they will not have a son to hand them on to, and some of those in use are yellow with age. The shells came from the sea originally, but no one knows how they were first

brought into the country, and now fresh-water mussel-shells are substituted.

Subincision is not done at the same time as the circumcision and may not be done for years afterwards. I cannot find among the Wonkonguru that it had any significance in their ceremonies. The blacks tell me that it is done so that the penis will be larger when erected. In this operation the man is held down on his back by five men, a pointed emu bone is forced down the urethra, to make it hard, and the operator then slits up the urethra with the leaf-shaped stone knife. Sometimes only a small slit is made; others I have seen have the penis opened right up to the base. After the cut has been made, the fat of a poison snake is rubbed on the wound and the man leaves the camp until the wound is healed.

The blood from the penis is held to be very potent for charms. If a blackfellow wants to poison a *kirra* so that it will kill his enemy he opens a vein in his penis and collects the blood in a *pirrha*. This is mixed up with red ochre and painted on the *kirra* in bands. It is then held that if the enemy is only touched with the *kirra* he will die. This blood is also held to be a sure protection if painted on a shield (*murrawarloo*) in the form of two transverse bands. The one holding a shield so painted cannot be hurt.

#### LEGEND OF THE WONKONGURU

A long time ago (*numeru*) a mura<sup>1</sup> who lived at Pandi Pandi, suffered great pain in his penis (*wuntu* or *woontoo*)

<sup>1</sup> Moora, mura, and mura-mura are all the same.

and there was a lot of *mira* (inflammation). To ease the pain he burnt the end of it with a fire-stick and thereby got immediate relief. He then made an order that all the men of the tribe should do the same; but, finding that the married men, through having connection with their wives, inflamed the wounds, he made an order that all boys should be burnt before initiation. This was done for many years (*numeru*) and boys died as a result of the burns.

One day the tribes were gathered at Kalamurina near Lake Eyre for the purpose of initiating a lot (*pinya*) of boys. As they were working, the boys who had been circumcised (*kurinna*) were sent over the big sand-hill. The mura-mura Wutraka was on a "walk-about" on his way to attend the ceremony. When getting near the place he found the body of a boy who had been dead a week. On getting over the next sand-hill he found more dead boys. When he got to the last sand-hill overlooking the ceremonial ground he found another boy who had just died. The mura-mura and his assistant crept to the top of the sand-hill and looked over. A boy was just being placed on the heap of men. The mura-mura and his assistant ran down, and dodging through the legs of the men holding the boy, he cut off the foreskin with a *yutchawunta* (stone knife), and then they ran back to the sand-hill and hid themselves. By this time the fire-stick had been brought and the old men were astonished to find that the foreskin had been cut off. They talked for a little while and then caught another boy. The mura-mura came down again, and dodging between the legs of the old men, cut off his fore-

skin. The old men were watching and saw the mura this time; so he revealed himself. He then ordered that they were not to use the fire-stick in future, but to use the tools he gave them. These were a long conical sandstone with a sharp-pointed end which he called *karamula yudika*, and a leaf-shaped *yutchawunta* (stone knife). He showed the old men that the foreskin must be stretched over the end of this stone and then cut around with the knife. At the end of the ceremony the old man who operated must go away, carrying the *karamula yudika* under his left arm. He must walk until he lost it without knowing where he dropped it, and if anyone found it afterwards he must bury it in the sand.

The mura-mura then named the tribe and gave them totems (*murdus*). He then went on visiting and naming all the tribes on the Warburton river and north up the Diamantina till he got near Cloncurry. By this time he was getting very tired, and finally gave up circumcision, contenting himself with tying on the armstring that denotes a made young man. Thence he went away to the west and finally reached the Macumba river near Oodnadatta. Feeling stronger, he started to circumcise the boys again, and when near Lake Eyre he circumcised two boys.

Feeling that he was getting weak, he and his assistant got two stones, and on one of them he carved the mark of circumcision and subincision. The other stone they shaped like a penis (*wuntu*), and for every boy that they had circumcised they set up a conical sandstone on a small hill. Then they died and two trees sprang

up to mark the spot where they died. These stones are visible to-day. As time went on the old men found that there was no need for the use of the *karamula yudika*, so that it gradually became only a ceremony, and a short piece of sandstone about four inches in length and about one inch in diameter was just put to the end of the penis and dropped to the ground. After a long time this was omitted and now the *karamula yudika* is "uncanny" (*kootchi*).

My informant states: "I have not seen these two mura-mura stones nor the hill where the sandstones are set up, but the old men all tell me they have visited them. There is no doubt about their fear of the conical stones; I have had difficulty in getting them to examine them. Four were brought in by an old gin from near Kalamurina. I showed them to a middle-aged blackfellow and asked him what they were. He could not tell me. A few days after he asked for them and took them up to a hut (*poonga*) on top of the sand-hill, where four old men were waiting. He carefully wrapped them up before taking them, and after the old men had deliberated over them for two hours he brought them back and showed me how they had been used 'long time ago.'"

The foregoing legend was not told me until some time afterwards, but every black who knows the legend has picked out the conical stone as the one used by the mura-mura.

#### CYLINDRO-CONICAL AND CORNUTE STONES

*Previous Authors.*—The following have given accounts and theories of how these stones were used :



1. Walter R. Harper, *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.*, Vol. 23, 1898, pp. 420-436.
2. Dr. Cox, *Proc. Linn. Soc.*, June 25, 1884.
3. W. Freeman, *A.A.A.S.*, 1902, p. 539.
4. R. H. Matthews, *A.A.A.S.*, 1909, *Proc.*, pp. 493-498.
5. R. Etheridge, Jun., *Memoirs of Geological Survey of N.S.W.*, pp. 1-4.
6. Mrs. Rankin, *Science of Man*: "Aboriginal Grave at Terragon."
7. R. Pulleine, M.B., Ch.M., *Trans. Royal Soc. S.A.*, Vol. XLVI., 1922.

*Description.*—About three hundred of these stones exist in our museums in Australia. Probably as many more may be found in private collections. They are roughly circular in section and taper to a blunt point. The other end is often cupped. Some of them are oval in section, and these are shorter in length. Also they are curved to one side and comprise the cornute type. The total length varies from three inches to thirty.

*Locality.*—The districts where these are found are very marked, being the country drained by the Darling on the east over to Lake Eyre on the west. This includes all the land of the Itchumundi, Karamundi and Barkinji over to the territory of the Lake Eyre tribes, which include the Yaurorka, Ngameni, Wonkonguru and Dieri.

*Composition.*—These stones are very variable in their composition. Some appear to have been shaped out of a mass of clay or *kopi*, as the gypsum is called. Others

are chipped out of slate or sandstone, but they may be laboriously worked out of felspar or quartzite.

*Markings.*—As a rule the surface is smooth, but in some distinct markings may be found. These may be divided into classes :

1. The tally marks, as the short transverse markings have been named. They may be in groups of two or three up to great numbers, or they may be scattered all over the stone.
2. Longitudinal marks. These sometimes are made haphazard over the stone, or may be made singly or in pairs across the shorter tally marks, as if crossing them out or grouping them together.
3. The so-called emu feet or broad-arrow markings. These are in any direction and may be well cut or simply scratches.
4. Rings round the pointed end of the stones. These are not commonly found.
5. Indiscriminate markings would include the rare radiating grooves cut at the base of the stone, dints where the stone has been used as a hammer, and similar traces.

*Uses.*—There have been many uses propounded for these stones : pounders have been the use to which many of them have been put. When one considers the habits of the aborigines one can quite see how any hard broken fragment would be picked up for a hammer. Their use in tooth avulsion is another purpose which has been attributed to them.

In the ceremonies for producing a better supply of vegetable foods or of snakes, which are their chief means of support, it is said that these stones are used.

It is also said that they are used to mark the graves, and this is undoubtedly true; but the same might be said of any other conspicuous stone or oval balls of *kopi*.

It has also been asserted that they are stuck into the ground with the base upwards and that blood is dropped into the cupped base. I can, however, find no absolute proof that this is done. Etheridge, who has very thoroughly investigated their use, suggests they had a phallic significance.

#### *How regarded by the Darling Aborigines*

Dr. Howitt in his magnificent treatise on the natives never mentions these stones. Sir Baldwin Spencer in dealing with them says: "The evidence in all cases is very meagre and inconclusive." The early settlers say (to quote Dr. Pulleine, *loc. cit.*): "The natives took no notice of them, neither using them nor avoiding them in any way, and had no name for them."

#### *How regarded by the Lake Eyre Natives*

Quoting Dr. Pulleine again, he says: "Mr. John Conrick of Nappa-Merri, Cooper's Creek . . . tells me that, although he has lived there since the early 'seventies, he has never seen them used or noticed by natives, and that they are known there simply by the name of moora."

From my own observations, and from those of Mr. Aiston, who is elder brother to the Wonkonguru east of

Lake Eyre, we found them recognised by the old aborigines, but not at all by the younger men.

The old men would be from seventy to ninety years old. Their age is calculated by their status when McKinley first came to the district and their relative ages. Thus, "me boy, this one man," when told by a seventy-year-old man, makes the second one eighty. This old man when shown the stones said, "Kootchi, Kootchi, Moora," meaning that they were uncanny and belonged to the moora.

#### LEGENDS OF ABORIGINES RE CIRCUMCISION

##### *Report on Karamoola, or Karamula, Yudika*

A most interesting stone is the *karamula yudika*, or circumcision stone. Mr. Aiston has one of these which is slightly broken at the lower end but is not hollowed at the base. He also sent two to Melbourne. One of them is in two pieces, the other whole. They were all found on the sand-hills near Kalamurina. I showed the one that Mr. Aiston has to my old friend Koonkoo Nutataculie, and also to Tarkarawikarie. They each at once averted their eyes, and with palms of hands raised and turned outwards motioned me away with it, saying, "Kootchi, kootchi" (Uncanny, uncanny). They stated, "Moora use make 'em man," but to Mr. Aiston they have each separately told the following story. He says :

"They are supposed to be the *wuntu*, or penis, turned to stone, of someone who died as the result of having been circumcised with a fire-stick. When the mooras showed how the operation should be performed with a

knife, they brought one each of these stones along. The foreskin was stretched over the point of the stone, which was held opposite to and in prolongation of the penis. The stone knife then cut around the end of the stone. After the operation was all over the old man who did the cutting put the *karamula yudika* under his arm and went away. He was supposed to lose it without knowing where it was dropped. I imagine that his arm tired and he dropped it without particularly noticing where. If afterwards it was found, the finder covered it up and the place where it lay was carefully noted, so that when wanted again it could be recovered. These stones were supposed never to be made by man.

"Later it was found that the operation could be performed without the use of the stone, so a small cylinder was employed. This was just held in front of the penis and in prolongation of it. Directly the foreskin was off the stone was dropped on the sand. The substitute was then lost in the same manner as the original. My informant was at great pains to convince me that the aborigines did not make them. The moora made them, in the same way as he made fossil wood into stone. This old fellow," concludes Mr. Aiston, "nearly fainted when I showed him the *karamula yudika*. He was horror-struck for the minute, and then he told me the above."

At present even the short substitute stone is not used, but a piece of wood, conical in shape, and made like a spear-point, is employed.

After the ceremony this is shown to the boy and its significance is explained.

One of the men from Cowarie on the Diamantina had left behind him at a deserted camp a box obtained from the homestead containing three *coorietoorooka*, or mussel-shells given to the initiate, a store of *munyeroo* seed, and, wrapped up in a bit of rag, a conical spear-point stick. It was plastered thick with red ochre and fat, and it smelt. Evidently these were prepared for the ceremony which is to take place when the season for the killing of wild dog pups, rewarded by the Government, is finished, and the tribe can gather again.

In the Melbourne and Sydney museums is a series of stones of which the majority are cylindro-conical in shape. A small number are short cylinders blunted at both ends. These are, evidently, the substitute stones.

This report has some weak points. The cylindro-conical stones are found most commonly in the valley of the Darling and its tributaries.

There, however, circumcision is unknown, and records of the uses above related are only to be found amongst those who still practise the rite.

To account for this, there are stories of changes of place amongst various tribes. Thus the Wonkonguru say that they formerly lived north of the Diamantina, but were driven south by the Ngameni. They in their turn displaced the Dieri, who now live south of Cooper's Creek.

Something similar may have been the lot of the Itchumundi, Karamundi and Barkinji, who pushed eastward from the Grey and the Barrier Ranges. On the other side of these mountains circumcision is still practised.

Both in weapons and in language there is a remarkable

resemblance between those dwelling to the east and those to the west of these mountain ranges.

Take, for instance, the following list of words quoted from E. M. Curr, *Australian Race*, Vol. II. p. 168 :

English.	Darling language	Lake Eyre language.	District near Lake Eyre where found.
Mother	Ngamukka	Namika	Mount Serle
Water	Ngookoo	Nguka	Cooper's Creek
Rain	Mukkra	Mukkra	Mount Remarkable
Kangaroo	Thurlda	Thuldria	Cooper's Creek, etc.
Opossum	Bilta	Pilta	Common to many places
Native companion	Kooroolko	Booralako	Cooper's Creek, etc.
One	Nitcha	Ninta	Macumba
Mosquito	Koondée	Koontee	Cooper's Creek, etc.
Ear	Uri	Uri	Common to many places
Mouth	Yalla	Yalla	Umbertana
Fire	Kulla	Kalla	Marachovie
Boomerang	Wana	Wanna	Beltana
Night	Tunka	Tinka	Cooper's Creek

Then, again, on both sides of the ranges we find two exogamous intermarrying classes with female descent (Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 90).

These are bounded on the east and north by tribes with four classes; and on the west and north by those with four intermarrying groups and descent in the paternal line (*Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, Spencer and Gillen, p. 74).

The only thing that can be suggested is that a series of dry seasons or some plague drove away all the natives from the Darling Valley, from which they fled, leaving the cylindro-conical stones. There is a tradition that a second migration took place long ago, when one man with his two wives, Kilpara and Mukwara, occupied the empty country. These two wives gave class-names to the Darling tribes (Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 97; Curr,

*loc. cit.*, Book VII), and judging by the language resemblances their arrival could have been at no remote date. That circumcision would not be practised amongst these immigrants would, as Curr suggests, be obviously because the small party could not afford to lose any of its members and food for all was assured.

Newland mentions a tribe of the Karamundi who circumcised their boys.

### WILYAROO

Concerning this ceremony there appears to be some difference of opinion. Probably it alters in different localities. Certainly its significance changes with change of place.

S. Gason,<sup>1</sup> writing in 1874 and dealing with the Dieri tribe, says that the Wilyaroo is "to procure a good harvest; supply of snakes and other reptiles." He speaks of it as being "the next ceremony following circumcision." However, amongst the Wonkonguru, at least two-thirds of the old men do not bear the marks, and among them are Nutatacullie, Tarkarawikarie and Piltibunna, three men whom I calculate to be each over seventy.

Gason,<sup>2</sup> speaking of the Beltana tribe, says they "call the young men Wilyaroo as amongst the Umbertana tribe." Curr,<sup>3</sup> quoting N. E. Phillipson and writing of these Umbertana, in speaking of initiation says, "A few months later they undergo the terrible rite, when they are styled Kobba. Later on they are scarred on the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Curr, *Aust. Races*, Vol. II., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 112.



chest and have the muscle of the left arm tightly bound up with a cord of human hair, when they are called Wilyaroo."

The Wilyaroo as described by Mr. Gason, and as quoted by Dr. A. W. Howitt must therefore have had quite a local significance.

I made careful inquiries from two old Wilyaroo men separately, and also asked Mr. Aiston to inquire.

We are sure that the following gives a correct version of what happens amongst the Wonkonguru.

If a young initiated man is too familiar with the women of the tribe, the old men of the Wilyaroo catch him, put a string round his arms in the upper arm and tie his thumbs together. Then they open their own veins and squirt the blood all over him. He is next taken to a little distance from the camp and a circle of fires is lit around him, just sufficient to keep him hot. After "two sleeps" the women come up and dance in a circle around and close up to the fires. Outside of them the Wilyaroo men dance in the opposite direction to the women. After two or three circlings the women retire, and light another fire, just sufficient to warm the ground. The ground is then cleared from a circle about a yard across, the ashes being swept to one side. This done the women sit around with their heads between their knees so that they see nothing.<sup>1</sup> The men dance

<sup>1</sup> This making the women hide their heads is carried out by the tribes inland from Carnarvon, W.A., at native ceremonies, where they lie on their face, guarded by an old man. A. W. Howitt also describes on page 522 how that, during a part of the initiation ceremony, the women sit with their backs to the men and are watched over by an old man.

up, leading the young man, the leader swinging the Wilyaroo *inchitcha*.<sup>1</sup> As the leader enters the circle of waiting women the *inchitcha* is thrust into the cleared patch and covered up with ashes. After a few minutes, just sufficient for it to get warm, it is suddenly jerked out and is then immediately hidden. The oldest Wilyaroo man then orders the young man to take one of the women ("You take 'em this one, go away").

The strings are cut, the blood rubbed off and the Wilyaroo marks are put on his back by the young Wilyaroo man. Then he goes bush with his appointed woman for a week or even for three weeks. After that he is Wilyaroo and "he catch 'em 'nother young fella."

The dried blood is intensely itchy and, his thumbs being tied, he is unable to scratch it. Nevertheless the Wilyaroo men are very proud of the marks, for no sense of shame or disgrace attaches to them on that account.

The man whose photograph is shown herewith is a Wilyaroo, but he says that he got away from the men who were holding him before they cut more than one side. He was caught later on and finished on both sides of his back.

<sup>1</sup> The bull-roarer—not to be seen by women.

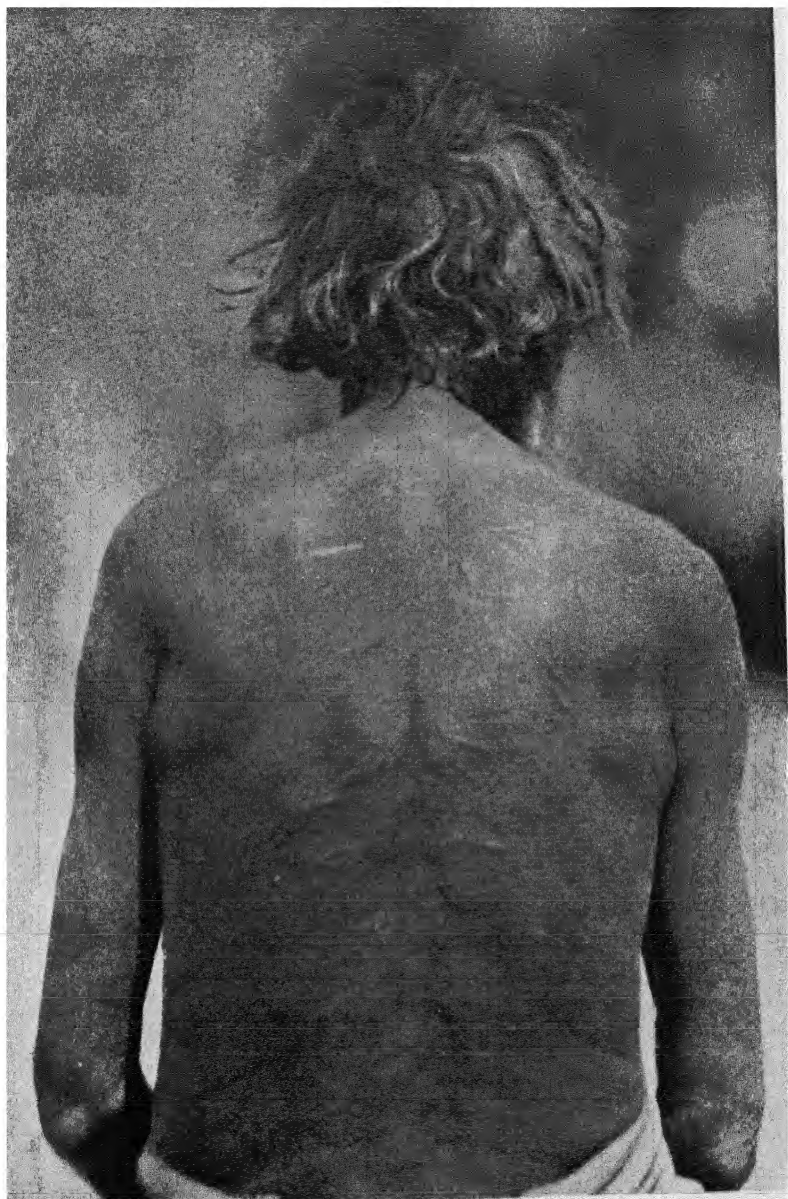


FIG. 90.—WILYAROO MARKS ON THE BACK.



## WONKONGURU WORDS

<i>Adno-artina</i>	Lizard Gecko (Kooyiannie legend).
<i>Aracopa</i>	Yellow ochre.
<i>Bowa</i>	<i>Munyeroo</i> seed.
<i>Conchera warroo</i>	Stone used to make <i>wirra</i> grow.
<i>Coolchera</i> or <i>Kulchera</i>	<i>Wit-wit</i> , play-stick for throwing.
<i>Coolkie</i> or <i>Kulki</i>	Stone hammer for chipping.
<i>Coorie</i>	Shell.
<i>Coorietoorooka</i>	Shell given at initiation.
<i>Coorinna</i>	Boys circumcised.
<i>Dampera</i>	String round waist.
<i>Digidigéllera</i>	Swallow invoked when rain-making.
<i>Dunpara</i>	Stand or platform in camp to keep food from dogs.
<i>Illyawunta</i>	Fighting knife.
<i>Inchitcha</i>	Churinga or bull-roarer.
<i>Kalara</i>	Stone-scraper.
<i>Kalara piddina</i>	Strike hit—an axe.
<i>Kandramooka</i>	Crooked bone; heap of stones.
<i>Killena</i>	High stepping in corroborees.
<i>Kirra</i>	Boomerang.
<i>Kirrala</i>	Vagina.
<i>Koolchee</i>	Balls.
<i>Koomana</i>	Shaking of knees in corroboree.
<i>Koorellie</i>	Twenty-one strands white head-band—below white band.
<i>Kopi</i>	Gypsum.
<i>Kundi</i> or <i>koondi</i>	Any curved stick—round boomerang.
<i>Kunti</i>	Beefwood gum.
<i>Kutna</i>	Core in stone-chipping.
<i>Kutti</i>	Leader in <i>mindarie</i> corroboree.
<i>Marindi</i>	Wild dog in ochre myth.
<i>Mickrie</i>	Soak.
<i>Milki</i>	Eye.
<i>Mindarie</i>	A corroboree.
<i>Mindrie</i>	Gum; it is also eaten.
<i>Mira</i>	Inflammation.
<i>Moora</i> or <i>Mura</i>	A supernatural being.
<i>Mudda</i>	Lower <i>munyeroo</i> stone.
<i>Muddalhirrie</i>	Upper stone; also used to smooth weapons.
<i>Mudlaunche</i>	Bad.
<i>Mulya</i>	Funeral cap.
<i>Mulyeroo</i>	Mud.
<i>Mungwarroo</i>	White forehead—widow's cap.
<i>Munkarara</i>	Throwing-stick or <i>womera</i> .
<i>Munta</i>	Net for head.
<i>Munyeroo</i>	Seed edible—fine.
<i>Murdie</i>	Hair belt.
<i>Murdoo</i> or <i>Murdu</i>	Totem.
<i>Murrallacardia</i>	Stones sown to make <i>wirra</i> grow.
<i>Murrawarroo</i>	Shield, imported of white wood—white hand.

<i>Murrawirrie</i>	.	.	Large sword boomerang—hand <i>wirrie</i> .
<i>Murulyie</i>	.	.	Red ochre.
<i>Nalla</i>	.	.	Charm to cause dreams.
<i>Nampa</i>	.	.	Stone for pounding ochre.
<i>Nardoo</i>	.	.	Seed-food.
<i>Nucoopirani</i>	.	.	Cold lie down—place where mooras died.
<i>Nulta</i>	.	.	Red ochre fibre headband.
<i>Numeroo or Numeru</i>	.	.	Long time ago.
<i>Nunvenarrie</i>	.	.	Scraper (Arunta).
<i>Palpara</i>	.	.	A small hawk.
<i>Piddinie</i>	.	.	Lower <i>nardoo</i> stone—to hit.
<i>Pinegara</i>	.	.	Net (rushes).
<i>Pintie-pintie</i>	.	.	Wagtail; women's representative.
<i>Pinya</i>	.	.	Armed revenge party; a mob.
<i>Pirramburra</i>	.	.	Lance or spear.
<i>Pirraha</i>	.	.	Wooden bowl (coolibah), carry-all—or seed dish.
<i>Pirrie</i>	.	.	Stone point scraper.
<i>Pitcheri</i>	.	.	Imported chewing leaf ( <i>Duboisia Hopwoodi</i> ).
<i>Poonga</i>	.	.	Mud shade hut.
<i>Pooya</i>	.	.	<i>Triodia</i> gum from N., used by all.
<i>Pundunya</i>	.	.	Stone scraper of casual chip.
<i>Telca</i>	.	.	White rat.
<i>Tharta</i>	.	.	Charm worn round forehead.
<i>Tidna</i>	.	.	Foot.
<i>Tingunta</i>	.	.	Needle-bush screen.
<i>Tuhla</i>	.	.	Stone adze used on <i>koondi</i> .
<i>Tutta</i>	.	.	Magic band.
<i>Ungobbera</i>	.	.	Corroboree.
<i>Wadna</i>	.	.	Woman's digging-stick.
<i>Wadnoarie</i>	.	.	Plant from which string is made.
<i>Wadroo</i>	.	.	Edible root.
<i>Warroo</i>	.	.	White.
<i>Weéerweéerlera</i>	.	.	Dotterel.
<i>Wichacka or witchatcha</i>	.	.	Dieri name for <i>wirrie</i> .
<i>Willa</i>	.	.	Edible creeper.
<i>Wulloo</i>	.	.	Curlew.
<i>Wulpie</i>	.	.	Shade hut.
<i>Wulpoo</i>	.	.	Pubic tassel.
<i>Wirra</i>	.	.	Wattle, ashes mixed with <i>pitcheri</i> .
<i>Wirragaroo</i>	.	.	Bone-pointing ( <i>mookoellie duckana</i> , Dieri).
<i>Wirrie</i>	.	.	Throwing club.
<i>Woontoo or Wuntu</i>	.	.	Penis.
<i>Wooroomaroo</i>	.	.	Net, fishing.
<i>Wumpigena</i>	.	.	Plume, owls' feathers.
<i>Yearda</i>	.	.	Acacia for soaking skin water-bags.
<i>Yelka</i>	.	.	Stones planted to make <i>yauas</i> grow.
<i>Yowa or yaua</i>	.	.	Yam.
<i>Yutchawunta</i>	.	.	General service knife.

# WONKONGURU NAMES OF PERSONS

Names.	English Names.	Meaning.	Murdu.
Carunta	Lagoon Charlie		
Chalpaliuna	Daniel		
Chunmullie			
Dinnabillie	Nipper		
Dintibunna	Samuel	Come back, finish	
Cooriebakupoon- tatagunta	Leah		
Ginwillie	Baldy		Acacia seed
Kirramurakoo	George		
Koodnakadie			
Koonkoo	The koonki		Black shag
Nutatacullie }			
Mannillie	Tom Brass		
Mowilliepedicha	Big George		
Muddaboola- boola	A woman	Pretty white stones	
Murrapitcheroo	Mundowdna Jack		
Neltalinna	Jackie Mercer		
Ngangamallana			
Peealinna	George		
Piltibunna	Elias		
Takaweeje	Crooked-foot Peter		
Tallapittie	Jackie Jones		
Tarkarawikarie	Peter Pinnaru		
Wadnacoorie	A woman	Broken shell	
Watamunka	Daniel		Cloud
Womperawonie	Kanowna woman	Wind along the stones	
Wonkamarrellie			
Yaratooli	Willie (a boy)		Woma
	Polly		Red ochre
	Lazy boy		Red ochre
	Alick Pinnaru		
	(Cowarie)		
	Topsy (Cowarie)		





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